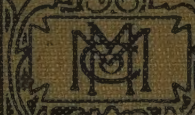
POEMS OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI



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CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

Pencil profile, 1849, by D. G. Rossetti.

SELECTED POEMS

OF

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

CHARLES BELL BURKE, PH.D.

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

There are in this loud stunning tide
  Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
  Of th' everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their heart
Through dusky lane and wrangling mart,
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat.

— THE CHRISTIAN YEAR.

New York

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TO

MARGARET DOUGLAS RICHARDS

WHOSE SAINTLY MINISTRY
IS AN ABIDING FRAGRANCE THIS LITTLE BOOK IS
WITHOUT HER KNOWLEDGE OR PERMISSION
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED

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PREFACE

Of Miss Rossetti's poetry, her brother's admirable edition presents four hundred and fifty-eight double-column pages — some twenty thousand verses. The editor's pleasant task has been to select six thousand lines, approximately one-fourth, with capital reference to young readers. That the selection will be generally satisfactory he cannot hope when it is somewhat unsatisfactory to himself. Unlike most poets, Miss Rossetti is almost uniformly excellent. She does not particularly need suppression nor exploitation. Open where you will, and you shall have artistic work. Often the aim in view will direct alone choice of this or rejection of that poem. The personal equation is sometimes only an expression of individual taste. In this edition her cheerful poems have been preferred as most suitable to the supremely important period of adolescence.

Inasmuch as Miss Rossetti is little known even to the lover of poetry, and inasmuch as her eminence is scarcely appreciated afar off by the public, it is deemed preferable to give such variorum criticism by men and women who speak authoritatively as shall lead the student to rely the more strongly upon his own favorable judgments. That this superb woman is a poet any reader of poetic susceptibility must at once feel, but he may be distrustful of his estimate in the absence of

high praise by established critics. Of those here quoted, it will be observed that several are themselves writers of verse more or less distinguished. It will not be regretted that this quotation is so elaborate as to make editorial criticism impracticable and unnecessary.

The editor's aim has been to make the most useful edition possible. As in the Introduction, so in the Notes, his concern has therefore been to reflect and suggest interpretation rather than to offer it outright. Sometimes comments of reputable critics were available and have been utilized. It has been constantly borne in mind, however, that the student should not be robbed of his right to personal effort. For mere meanings of words readily found in dictionaries and encyclopædias, he is referred to such sources. It is hoped that the editorial work will be found stimulating rather than drily informative; it may be too much to hope that it will be inspirational. Of inspiration the poems will themselves take care.

Frank and grateful acknowledgment is hereby made for the unrestricted use of Mr. William Michael Rossetti's labors of love. His Memoirs, his notes, his text, indeed, all available pertinent matter, have been freely laid under tribute. For successors he has in some respects left scant gleaning. Similar thanks are offered all who have contributed to the enrichment of this edition, and due credit has been recorded in every case.

Closely as Mr. Rossetti has been followed in general, it is thought best in this edition to make the arrangement as nearly chronological as possible. To such order there seem, in this instance, to be no serious objections, and for it, there are obvious reasons.

A complete list of the poet's writings has seemed inadvisable. Every library should possess the Macmillan edition of her poems. An equal space, it is hoped, has been better filled.

Should the *Selected Poems of Christina G. Rossetti* contribute never so faintly to the juster appreciation of her noble spirit and her beautiful art, the exertions of all concerned will be amply rewarded.

C. B. B.

University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, 14th May, 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

SKETCH OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

The Rossetti family was in many ways distinguished. Perhaps, indeed, in all the ample and glorious line of English letters, there has been no other family so many members of which have been gifted. The closest parallels are probably the Tennysons and the Brontës. With the Rossettis, moreover, two generations are concerned, one Italian, and one English; and, singularly enough, in each generation four children are more or less celebrated. The English roof-tree may not inaptly be styled a veritable nest of larks or of nightingales. Accordingly it should not seem irrelevant to give a cursory glance at all the prominent ones of so remarkable a connection, as best preparing for our more immediate consideration.

The most variously gifted was the father, Gabriele Pasquale Giuseppe Rossetti.[1] Though presumptively related to a family named Della Guardia, socially superior to the Rossettis, he was on both sides of quite humble origin; his father, Nicola, was a blacksmith and locksmith, and his mother's father a shoemaker. Amid such conditions, where everything remains to be achieved, the children were ambitious and exceptional. Andrea, born in 1765, was a canonical orator and poet; Antonio, born in 1770, wig-maker and barber (compare Allan Ramsay), was at least a versifier; Domenico, born in 1772, was a journalist, medical writer, theologian, and poet,

1 "The name Rossetti might be translated into 'Ruddykins' or 'Redkins' as an English equivalent. My father used to say that the Rossetti race was an offshoot of the Della Guardia family, well known and still subsisting in Vasto, and that at some date or other certain children of the Della Guardia stock were noted for florid complexion and reddish hair, and thus got called 'the Rossetti,' in accordance with the Italian hobby for nicknames and that this name gradually stuck to them as a patronymic." — W. M. Rossetti, in *Memoir of Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, 1895.

with a knowledge of French, Latin, some Hebrew, and of civil and canonical law. Born 28 February, 1783, at Vasto, in the Abruzzi, kingdom of Naples, Gabriele became easily first. He early displayed talent in both art and poetry. Of his mastery of pen-and-ink drawing, and of his skill as an improvisatore of Italian poetry, the son, famous for the same high endowments, was wont to speak with enthusiasm. His musical gift — he was a fine tenor — was not inherited by any of the offspring, though his children were all notable for the agreeable quality of voice in conversation and reading. After such schooling as was afforded by his native town, capped by a year in the University of Naples, he became librettist of the San Carlo operatic theatre, and, subsequently, Curator of Ancient Marbles and Bronzes in the Museo Borbonico, Naples. For a time, too, in 1814, he was, under Murat, Secretary of Instruction and Fine Arts. He was highly patriotic, a member of the Carbonari, and in 1820 a participant in the agitation for a constitution. Though such an instrument was granted by Ferdinand I, it was revoked, and the insurrectionists were treated as criminals. Gabriele Rossetti fled in disguise for his life. Making his way to Malta, he thence, after a time, thanks to John Hookham Frere, proceeded to London in 1824. Here he remained the rest of his life; but, though he never revisited the Continent, he was to the last a loyal Italian in exile, and never became a British subject.

After giving private instruction in Italian, he married, in 1826, Frances Maria Lavinia Polidori, second daughter of Gaetano Polidori, sometime secretary to Alfieri, a poet in his own right, and translator of Milton into Italian; Miss Polidori was sister to Dr. John Polidori, author of two volumes of verse and of two tales, who in 1816 accompanied Byron as his physician. The year of his happy marriage was further signalized by the publication of his *Commento Analitico Sulla Divina Commedia*. In 1831 he became Professor of Italian in King's College; in 1832 he published *Sullo Spirito Antipapale che produsse la Riforma* (*On the Antipapal Spirit Which Produced the Reformation*); in 1840, *Il Mistero dell' Amor Platonico del Medio Evo* (*The Mysterious Platonic Love of the Middle Age*), and *Iddio e l'Uomo*, *Salterio* (*God and Man, a Psaltery*); in 1842, *La Beatrice di Dante*; in 1846, *Veggente in Solitudine* (*The Seer in Solitude*); in 1847, *Versi*; and in 1852, *L'Arpa Evangelica* (*The Evangelical Harp*).

His earlier patriotic verse had given him local fame, and his later literary work in England was hailed by admiring countrymen. So celebrated did he become that a medal was struck in his honor, and his centenary was commemorated in 1883. The Piazza del

Pesche, "the noble market-place in his native town," became the Piazza Gabriele Rossetti; here a statue will later be set up. The Teatro Comunale Rossetti was so named in his honor. Finally, his house has been purchased for public use. Abundantly worthy was he of such honor. His strong character, noble nature, amiable disposition, are variously attested — as Dante Gabriel said, "a father in a million." Owing to a partial failure of his eyes, he gave up his professorship in 1845, and after much incapacitating illness, died 26 April, 1854.

To be the wife of such a man Miss Polidori was admirably fitted. Her father and her brother had decided literary tastes; she did some verses, and might have won distinction as a writer had she not devoted herself unreservedly to the care of her remarkable household, and more particularly to the home education of her daughters. No writer herself, she was the nurse of writers. Those who had the privilege of her intimate acquaintance speak in praise of her gentle nature, her fine critical appreciation of letters, her beautiful reading. Of all her children she was the idol, and of most of their books the beloved dedicatee. She was happily endowed, too, with a saving fund of common sense, which stood the little home in good stead. Having been a governess, she naturally thought of instruction when her husband's eyes failed him, and the support of the family devolved on her. She opened a day-school in 1851 at her home, 38 Arlington Street, London, and later, spring of 1853, conducted a similar enterprise at Frome, Somerset. Unfortunately, neither experiment prospered. The illness of her husband proved fatal in 1854. Him she survived a whole generation; at length, full of years, and, in her decline, provided lovingly with adequate comforts, she died 8 April, 1886.

Of this noble pair there were four children: Maria Francesca (17 February, 1827, to 24 November, 1876); Gabriel Charles Dante (12 May, 1828, to 9 April, 1882); William Michael (25 September, 1829–); and Christina Georgina (5 December, 1830, to 29 December, 1894). It was a home of great freedom for children — they enjoyed a great deal of judicious neglect. Nursery and study and reception-room were often one. Adults of England, and strangely excitable aliens from the Rossetti fatherland, some of them doubtless mere adventurers drawn thither by hope of aid from their brilliant countryman, talked without restraint in the presence of these attentive and observant little folk. Bilingual, they understood all; — the father, though he learned English in Malta and improved it in London, always spoke his own language in the family, and the children learned early both to speak and

to write it. They were of course childlike in their love of play, yet they are said to have led a rather lonely life, so far as associates beyond the home are concerned. There, indeed, of much the same age, with a father whose winsome nature [1] was not too dignified for a romp, and a mother as tender as she was refined, they must have been happy enough.

All were precocious. From the age of five Gabriel was attempting dramas, tales, verses, and giving some indication of his pictorial endowments. Before nine Christina had begun her career. I here quote from the *Memoir* prefixed to her Poems by William Rossetti: "Possibly the earliest thing which Christina wrote (or rather, I think, got some one to write from her dictation) was the beginning of a tale called perhaps *The Dervise*, on the model (more or less, *i.e.* very little) of *The Arabian Nights*. The dervise, I think, went down into a cavern, where he was to meet with some adventures not much less surprising than those of Aladdin. In the thick of the plot it occurred to Christina that she had not yet given her dervise a name, so she interjected a sentence, 'The Dervise's name was Hassan,' and continued his perilous performances. This outraged the literary sense of Gabriel and the rest of us. I doubt whether, after *The Dervise*, Christina wrote anything else prior to 1840, the date of *Retribution*, which I have briefly mentioned in my *Memoir of Dante Rossetti*. This also must have been an oriental — I suppose a crusading — prose tale, as one incident was 'Sir Guy finding the letter of Ali.'" In 1840 all four were to write a romantic tale, but only Gabriel's was preserved. Christina was writing verse at least by eleven; perhaps, as she recollected, much

[1] All really *human* readers will appreciate the following doggerel from *Sing-Song* and the accompanying note: —

"Kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!"
Crows the cock before the morn;
"Kikirikee! kikirikee!"
Roses in the east are born.

"Kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!"
Early birds begin their singing;
"Kikirikee! kikirikee!"
The day, the day, the day is springing.

Kookoorookoo — Kikirikee. — I may perhaps be pardoned for saying that these poultry-noises form a reminiscence from Christina's own childhood. Our father was in the habit of making the noises to amuse his bantlings. — W. M. Rossetti.

earlier. And so with Maria and William. Their very games were intellectual, latterly, not seldom contests in versification. In 1842, at the time of the Anglo-Chinese Opium War, William had been required by a teacher to write some verses on China, and Christina, aged eleven, thought she too would try it, with the following result: —

THE CHINAMAN

"Centre of Earth!" a Chinaman he said,
And bent over a map his pig-tailed head, —
That map in which, portrayed in colours bright,
China, all dazzling, burst upon the sight;
"Centre of Earth!" repeatedly he cries,
"Land of the brave, the beautiful, the wise!"
Thus he exclaimed; when lo his words arrested
Showed what sharp agony his head had tested.
He feels a tug — another, and another —
And quick exclaims, "Hallo! what's now the bother?"
But soon, alas, perceives. And, "Why, false night,
Why not from men shut out the hateful sight?
The faithless English have cut off my tail,
And left me my sad fortunes to bewail.
Now in the streets I can no more appear,
For all the other men a pig-tail wear."
He said, and furious cast into the fire
His tail: those flames became its funeral-pyre.

In the same spirit, when she and Gabriel made a memorable visit to the Zoölogical Garden, she felt the amusement would be enhanced by imagining the thoughts of the beasts. She wished, says Sharp, that the birds might "be honored by plaintive verses; but Gabriel narrated such whimsical biographies of birds and beasts that poetry gave way to fun."

Maria had been a governess, and then had gone out giving lessons in Italian. At the same time she was not neglectful of her literary work and her religious yearnings. At fourteen she had translated into blank verse the greater part of an ode by Cavaliere Campana on the Princess Borghese; at nineteen was privately printed *The Rivulets: A Dream not all a Dream*, an allegory of life and religion, the characters being Liebe, Selbsucht, Eigendünkel, and Faule; at forty-four she published a masterpiece, *The Shadow of Dante*, written in her early womanhood — a valuable contribution to the scholarship of the great poet. Pertinent was Gabriel's comment: "*She* was the Dante in our family." Long a devotee

in spirit, she craved seclusion, and after publishing, at forty-five, *Letters to My Bible Class on Thirty-Nine Sundays*, she took the veil in 1873, becoming a member of All Saints' Sisterhood of the Church of England. This step she would have taken earlier but for a sense of duty to her family. Unhappily she was not long to enjoy the sweet communion. Disease smote her, and she died, 24 November, 1876. Of her William said: "She was more warmly and spontaneously devotional than any other person I have ever known."

Dante Gabriel, as he preferred to write his name, is perhaps the most distinguished man in our literary history who has achieved fame in two great arts. Milton knew music, but made of it simply a recreation and solace. Until Rossetti's time Blake had been the greatest painter-poet. Browning knew something of both music and painting, but he is remembered as only a poet. With regard to this English Italian, competent critics are far from agreeing whether he is greater as painter (despite his never mastering the fundamentals of art) or as poet. He is undoubtedly sensuous and passionate, a gorgeous colorist in pigment and in diction. In the sonnet and the ballad he is consummate; as a mystic dreamer he was without a rival in his day; as a translator, especially from the Italian, his prëeminence is still clearer. *Dante and his Circle* reveals the plastic hand that could subdue our intractable English to a suave grace worthy of the Florentine. Slow to publish, he was eagerly acclaimed by the judicious, and he is rightly accounted one of the glories of Victorian verse.

William Michael, like his mother, chose rather to stimulate than to create. In an atmosphere of versifying he did not himself neglect the fascination of numbers, and, as with Gabriel and Christina, acquired great facility in *bouts-rimés*[1] sonnets; his brother and sister completed some within five minutes. His literal blank-verse rendering of Dante's *Inferno* in 1865 has been highly praised. He has written considerable original poetry which he has never collected in a permanent form. By his critical and editorial work, however, he is best known. At twenty he was chosen to direct the brief but not inglorious career of *The Germ*, the organ of the Præraphaelites. He has edited the poets Campbell, Shelley, Keats, Blake, Coleridge, Milton, Swinburne, and Whitman; written the *Lives of Famous Poets;* and, above all, been the historiographer royal of the Rossetti dynasty — a house

[1] A game of versification in which the riming words are given and the players complete the lines. — *Standard Dictionary*.

whose divine endowments have been triumphantly asserted and whose divine rights there is none to dispute. And yet from 1845 to 1894 he was connected with the Inland Revenue (excise) office, assistant secretary after 1869, and his literary performance was a thing apart. Upon his good nature his brother made heavy demands, much of William's leisure being cheerfully employed in Gabriel's behalf. The Italian line became extinct in 1894, and with him the English Rossettis will cease to exist in the flesh. In the hearts of all who love painting and poetry, however, the name is immortally enshrined.

Christina Georgina[1] was the youngest of the children — it came with a lass and it will go with a lass — and of the four she was in some respects the most promising. Reared amid such culture and refinement, it is not surprising that she early gave evidence of uncommon talent. She thought, indeed, that she was scarcely fortunate in her ancestry: "I feel that we — I, at least — ought to be far worthier after so much pioneering on the part of our relatives. I am afraid they would look upon us as mere appendices to the Rossetti Chapter." Her grandfather Polidori said of her when she was a child, "Avrà più spirito di tutti (she will be the cleverest of the set)"; and Gabriel in after years spoke of her as "the daughter of what was noblest in our father and beautiful in our mother," and as "the genius of the family." With a father, a mother, four uncles, a grandfather, a sister, and two brothers more or less poetic, she was inspired to something far beyond the mediocre. To this her childish melancholy may be attributed. She was ambitious to write the most beautiful hymn of modern days, and Maria predicted that Christina would be the poet of the family.

Though some of her youthful verse may have been destroyed, there is a little stanza of her twelfth year that may be quoted here apropos of sacred song: —

HYMN

To the God who reigns on high,
  To the Eternal Majesty,
To the blessed Trinity,
  Glory on earth be given,
In the sea and in the sky,
  And in the highest heaven.

[1] So named after her godmothers, Lady Dudley Stuart, originally the Princess Christine Bonaparte, niece of Napoleon I, and Miss Georgina Macgregor, whose governess Mrs. Rossetti had once been.

A far cry this from *Passing Away* (p. 106), but significant of her serious adolescence. As different as possible in both aim and mood is the very first of her rhymes that have come down to us, written at eleven :

To my Mother on the Anniversary of her Birth

(Presented with a Nosegay)

To-day's your natal day;
Sweet flowers I bring:
Mother, accept I pray
My offering.

And may you happy live,
And long us bless;
Receiving as you give
Great happiness.

From this time she wrote as she was impelled, bequeathing exquisite impressions of both the outer and the inner life. If the latter predominate, the cause is not far to seek. The currents of her life, which would in all probability have been sufficiently cheerful, were turned awry by ill-health and disappointments in love.

Until her fifteenth year, Christina had been comparatively exempt from serious physical ailments, but now she entered upon a long career of pain. What appeared to be angina pectoris was followed by a cough symptomatic of consumption, which was a constant menace till she was nearly forty. At forty-one she had exophthalmic bronchocele (popularly, Dr. Graves's disease), which strangely affected her eyes and complexion, and of which heart trouble was a complication. William states that her least unhealthy years were about 1861, and again 1867–1870. On her condition in 1849 her *Looking Forward* is an interesting comment, the more interesting as it may relate also to her first romance. Poignant is its world-weariness. It is in her mother's writing; though clear enough, mentally, to compose poetry, she was physically too weak to use her pen. Indeed, it was thought that Christina would live scarcely the average lifetime.

LOOKING FORWARD

Sleep, let me sleep, for I am sick of care;
Sleep, let me sleep, for my pain wearies me.
Shut out the light; thicken the heavy air
With drowsy incense; let a distant stream
Of music lull me, languid as a dream,
Soft as the whisper of a summer sea.

Pluck me no rose that groweth on a thorn,
Nor myrtle white and cold as snow in June,
Fit for a virgin on her marriage morn:
But bring me poppies brimmed with sleepy death,
And ivy choking what it garlandeth,
And primroses that open to the moon.

Listen, the music swells into a song,
A simple song I loved in days of yore;
The echoes take it up and up along
The hills, and the wind blows it back again. —
Peace, peace, there is a memory in that strain
Of happy days that shall return no more.

O peace! your music wakeneth old thought,
But not old hope that made my life so sweet,
Only the longing that must end in nought.
Have patience with me, friends, a little while:
For soon, where you shall dance and sing and smile,
My quickened dust may blossom at your feet.

Sweet thought that I may yet live and grow green,
That leaves may yet spring from the withered root,
And buds and flowers and berries half unseen.
Then, if you haply muse upon the past,
Say this: Poor child, she has her wish at last;
Barren through life, but in death bearing fruit.

8 JUNE 1849.

A similar despairing strain appears in *One Certainty*, *A Testimony*, and *Next of Kin*. Apparently, the last alludes to her cousin Henrietta Polydore,[1] whom she survived twenty years.

At seventeen, Christina met James Collinson, a painter, a versifier, and a member of the Præraphaelite Brotherhood, who won

[1] Henrietta's father had anglicized the family name. Even in America brothers sometimes spell native names differently.

her affection. There seems to have been but one barrier to a happy union. Formerly an Anglican, he was now a Catholic. She frankly told him that she could not marry one of that faith. On his reverting to the Church of England, she accepted him. He soon found, however, that his conscience disapproved his change, and he rejoined the Roman Communion. Promptly Christina dismissed him. "I will not harshly condemn James Collinson," writes William, "for these successive tergiversations: he was a right-meaning man of timorous conscience. But he had none the less struck a staggering blow at Christina Rossetti's peace of mind on the very threshold of womanly life, and a blow from which she did not fully recover for years."

It is at least possible that *Remember* refers to this romance, and pretty certain that *What?* does.

Remember

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

25 July 1849.

What?

Strengthening as secret manna,
Fostering as clouds above,
Kind as a hovering dove,
Full as a plenteous river,
Our glory and our banner
For ever and for ever.

Dear as a dying cadence
Of music in the drowsy night:
Fair as the flowers which maidens

Pluck for an hour's delight,
And then forget them quite.

Gay as a cowslip-meadow
Fresh opening to the sun
When new day is begun:
Soft as a sunny shadow
When day is almost done.

Glorious as purple twilight,
Pleasant as budding tree,
Untouched as any islet
Shrined in an unknown sea:
Sweet as a fragrant rose amid the dew:—
As sweet, as fruitless too.

A bitter dream to wake from,
But oh how pleasant while we dream!
A poisoned fount to take from,
But oh how sweet the stream!

MAY 1853.

A similar disappointment arose from her acquaintance with Charles Bagot Cayley, a brother of the Cambridge mathematician, and, as early as 1847, a pupil of her father's in Italian. Like Collinson he had been brought up in the English Church, but had become so preoccupied with scholarship that in her view he was indifferent about the most important thing in the world. She felt she should not be happy with a virtual freethinker, and therefore declined to marry him. "Years passed," again writes the brother; "she became an elderly and an old woman, and she loved the scholarly recluse to the last day of his life, 5 December, 1883, and, to the last day of her own, his memory." It seems that she could not altogether repress a flirtatious proclivity, leading Cayley on to a proposal which she foresaw she should decline. This she practically admits in a letter to her "dear old friend," as she salutes him: "Very likely there was a moment when — and no wonder — those who loved you best thought very severely of me, and indeed I deserve severity at my own hands, — I never seemed to get much at yours."

The following is a half-playful, half-earnest expression of her sense of Cayley's obtuseness as a lover: —

A Sketch

The blindest buzzard that I know
  Does not wear wings to spread and stir;
  Nor does my special mole wear fur,
And grub among the roots below:
He sports a tail indeed, but then
It's to a coat: he's man with men:
  His quill is cut to a pen.

In other points our friend's a mole,
  A buzzard, beyond scope of speech.
  He sees not what's within his reach,
Misreads the part, ignores the whole;
  Misreads the part, so reads in vain,
  Ignores the whole though patent plain, —
  Misreads both parts again.

My blindest buzzard that I know,
  My special mole, when will you see?
  Oh no, you must not look at me,
There's nothing hid for me to show.
  I might show facts as plain as day:
  But, since your eyes are blind, you'd say,
  "Where? What?" and turn away.

15 August 1864.

In celebration of this somewhat Platonic experience she wrote a series of Italian poems, twenty-one in number, and dated from 1862 to 1868 — *Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente* (*The Flush of the Dawn*).

On these matters of health and heart I dwell here because they are thought to have sadly affected the life and tinged the poetry of this sensitive spirit. She was at first "of a lively, and a somewhat capricious or even fractious, temper; but she was warm-natured, engaging, and a general favourite, considerably prettier than her elder sister Maria." Of her irritability more than one has spoken (it was really subdued only after she was forty); but her brother William thinks that both she and others exaggerated this infirmity. Maria must not be taken too seriously (indeed, our poet is our authority for the statement) when she declares that "*she* had the good sense, William the good nature, Gabriel the good heart, and Christina the bad temper, of their much loved father and mother." Though her poems rather prevailingly betray a crushed heart, a hurt soul, — many are genuine lyric cries, — her

letters abound with cheer. This must mean only that she was self-contained, in matters so intimately personal proudly self-sufficient. Only her confessor, if he, would hear the sigh else suppressed. If we bear these considerations in mind, we shall better understand her mood.

To the foregoing should now be added a third cause of what some are pleased to call morbidity — religion. Christina turned to religion, not because of ill-health and disappointment, but because, like Maria, she was really a mystic. Both she and her sister would, under altered circumstances, have been more content in the Romish Church ; in a convent they would have caught the vision beatific. But their father's Italian experience made him hostile to the papacy, and they honored their mother too highly to abandon her faith unless constrained by a sense of duty.[1] Remaining true to the faith in which they were born, they were nevertheless Anglo-Catholics. "I will not dwell," says William, "upon . . . her perpetual church-going and communions, her prayers and fasts, her submission to clerical direction, her oblations, her practice of confession." She is said to have surrendered all private judgment. Her faith was vital, all in all — it was knowledge, assurance. She would not argue about it — she was satisfied. What alone gave her concern was the uncertainty whether her faith should prove availing, whether she were one of the elect. When she wrote the following at twenty-seven, she was terribly in earnest : —

> I used to labour, used to strive
> For pleasure with a restless will:
> Now if I save my soul alive
> All else what matters, good or ill ?"

[1] "To myself it is in the beloved Anglican Church of my Baptism that these things are testified, a living Branch of that One Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church which is authoritatively commended and endeared to me by the Word of God. Christ, Whose mystical Body she is, is her Head, and the Holy Ghost, Whose Temple she is, is her overruling Will and Power ! "

Quoted from Sharp's *Atlantic* article, this is from one of her several prose treatises, "which, as she once said with a sad smile, the literary world that praised her so much studiously ignored."

How much she valued her prose and verse published through The Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge may be gathered from the following words of a letter to Gabriel, January, 1881: "I don't think harm will accrue from my S.P.C.K. books, even to my standing: if it did, I should still be glad to throw my grain of dust into the religious scale."

Of this attainment Maria felt confident, but Christina was Bunyanesque in the sense of her unworthiness of so great salvation. She could never have professed sanctification. Really, sonnet 27 of *Later Life* was no mere literary exercise: —

27

I have dreamed of Death: — what will it be to die
  Not in a dream, but in the literal truth,
  With all Death's adjuncts ghastly and uncouth,
The pang that is the last and the last sigh?
Too dulled, it may be, for a last good-bye,
  Too comfortless for any one to soothe,
  A helpless charmless spectacle of ruth
Through long last hours, so long while yet they fly.
So long to those who hopeless in their fear
  Watch the slow breath and look for what they dread:
While I supine with ears that cease to hear,
With eyes that glaze, with heart-pulse running down
  (Alas! no saint rejoicing on her bed),
May miss the goal at last, may miss a crown.

Her own salvation she tried to work out with fear and trembling; but while rigorously conscientious she was not bigoted or intolerant. She early gave up the drama, even opera, because of their immoral relations; and chess, because she was too eager to win. This self-denial she exacted of no other, and herself continued to play whist, cribbage, and bézique. She was in the world, yet she strove to be of it as little as possible. Both she and Maria seem to have talked most earnestly to their brothers about their future. When William's little son was about to die unbaptized, Christina insisted in default of clerical ministration on performing, herself, the sacred office.

As an instance of her Christian spirit I quote a letter concerning a man to whom she had given permission to set to music some of her verses. On subsequently hearing of his connection with some alleged scandal, she revoked her consent, but felt uneasy.

"My dear Gabriel, —— has written in answer. He does not say a word about the setting; but asserts himself 'an innocent man' (premising that he 'will not affect to misunderstand' my letter), and appears what in one case I consider justly hurt, and in the other resentful. I am very much pained: and I think I shall write once more — finally — not of course to reconsider the question of the music, but to make myself less uncomfortable in case (however

blindly) I have been unjust. No explanations or details or assertions will be needed ; and under no possible circumstances can harm ensue. Do not laugh : I am weighed upon by the responsibility of all one does or does not do ;[1] besides, I think our dearest mother inclines in the same direction practically that I do as to this affair."

This is the letter, not of a child, but of a woman of fifty. Aside from the apologetic tone toward Gabriel, it might require a casuist to determine whether it be the correspondent or herself she the more wishes to ease. This again exemplifies how tremendously concerned she was with making her election sure. Nor did such characteristic pass unnoticed. William says that "a lady told my sister that the latter seemed to 'do all from self-respect,' not from fellow-feeling with others, or from kindly consideration for them." From this hint she wrote *Is and Was* (p. 33) and recurred to the matter in *Enrica* (p. 155).

Once more, on Gabriel's intimating that her praise of a common acquaintance would be qualified if she knew him better, she rejoined : "*Hero-worship* is not the feeling I dedicate to George Hake, much less to Mr. Dunn, though I have a warm liking for the former and a secondary do. for the latter : but I can imagine grave faults in both, and am quite sure you know a great deal about them which must (and is most welcome to) continue unknown to me. Yet I recollect our good Maria once remarking that one never understood a person unless one liked him, and so I fancy I may have the best chance of grasping our subject."

Such points of view prepare us for poetry certainly grave, but not necessarily morbid. Life's C major she did not affect. Her tuneful minor, however, is sane, Christian, and appealing. To her this world was not precisely a vale of tears ; it assuredly was not her home.

Christina was a reluctant though dutiful assistant in the schools undertaken by the noble mother in consequence of the father's evil days, the boys not yet being productive. As is evidenced by the following from a letter to William, she found such work a school of affliction : "I am rejoiced to feel that my health does really

[1] "No precept of the Christian religion was more indelibly impressed upon her mind and her sympathies than 'Judge not, that ye be not judged.' She never — not even in thought, so far as thought was under her control — imputed a bad motive to any one. . . . Another text which she constantly bore in mind is that one is not to do 'anything whereby thy brother stumbleth or is offended or is made weak.'" — W. M. Rossetti.

unfit me for miscellaneous governessing *en permanence.*" Since Maria and her mother were "governessing," however, Christina would have attempted things far more repugnant to help raise the family fortunes and to manifest her love. She had at that time only begun to publish. Nowadays a woman of her ability might from the magazines alone earn at least a competency, but it is conjectured that from 1854 to 1862, she averaged scarcely fifty dollars a year; from 1862 to 1890 not more than two hundred dollars. Even after 1890 her literary income was never large. To school work she was therefore urged as practically the sole means of aid. And that failed. For some twenty years the younger brother provided amply for the widowed mother and two sisters.

Christina's uneventful life was relieved by occasional trips to various parts of the tight little island, and two visits to the Continent. In 1861 she went with her mother and William, as he records, to "Paris, Rouen, Normandy (especially Coutances), and Jersey"; and in 1865 the three went to "North Italy (Como, Pavia, Brescia, Verona, Milan, etc.), going out by the St. Gothard route (no tunnel was then in existence), and returning by the Splügen route, Schaffhausen, Strasbourg, etc."

Now, however, she was writing in earnest. Already, in 1847, her grandfather Polidori thought so well of her verses that he printed sixty-six titles at his private press — a little volume very rare and said to be "now worth literally more than its weight in gold." They were written from eleven to sixteen. In 1848 she contributed to *The Athenæum*, *Heart's Chill Between* and *Death's Chill Between*. Her contributions to *The Germ* in 1850 were seven: *An End*, *Dream Land*, *A Pause of Thought*, *Song* (Oh, roses for the flush of youth), *A Testimony*, *Repining*, and *Sweet Death*. In *Macmillan's Magazine* her *Up-Hill* in 1861 challenged unusual attention, and in 1862 this was firmly sustained and enhanced by her first book — *Goblin Market and other Poems*, which some think she never surpassed or even equalled. She published in 1866 *The Prince's Progress and other Poems;* in 1870, *Commonplace, and other Short Stories;* in 1872, *Sing-Song* — a booklet of nursery rhymes; in 1874, *Annus Domini, a Prayer for each Day of the Year* and *Speaking Likenesses;* in 1879, *Seek and Find;* in 1881, *A Pageant and other Poems*, and *Called to be Saints;* in 1883, *Letter and Spirit;* in 1885, *Time Flies;* in 1892, *The Face of the Deep, a Devotional Commentary on the Apocalypse;* in 1893, *Verses*. Posthumous publications include *New Poems*, 1896; *Maude*, 1897, written about 1850; and *The Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti* 1904 — these all edited by William. In addition to all these, she in

the eighties thought of doing for *Eminent Women* (a series edited by the Reverend J. H. Ingram) Joan of Arc, Mrs. Fry, Lady Augusta Stanley, Mary Lamb, Adelaide Procter, Mrs. Radcliffe, or Mrs. Browning. George Eliot or George Sand she did not seriously consider. Nothing, however, came from her. Of her fourteen books issued before her death, all but two were dedicated to her mother. Besides many articles on Italian writers and other celebrities in the *Imperial Dictionary of Biography*, there are fugitive articles in *The Century* and other magazines.

She was called the least bookish of the family, and is said to have "picked up" things rather than acquired them. Her college was her home, but her mother was not professor of things in general. Though the curriculum was narrow, it seems to have been deep and thorough. To Mr. Gosse she wrote: "For me, as well as for Gabriel, whilst our school was everything, it was no one definite thing. I, as the least and last of the group, may remind you that besides the clever and cultivated parents who headed us all, I in particular beheld far ahead of myself the clever sister and two clever brothers who were a little (though but a little) my seniors. And as to acquirements, I lagged out of all proportion behind them, and have never overtaken them to this day."

French and Italian she knew well, a bit of Latin, no Greek; her mastery of English is obvious. She had the family gift of drawing (Gabriel declared she might have done well had she given her attention to art), but was not musical. Literary passions Christina Rossetti could hardly be said to have. Like Wordsworth, she was not an extensive reader and possessed few books. Science, philosophy, theology, were practically undiscovered realms. Even history had no great attraction for her, though biography was alluring. The Bible, however, *Augustine's Confessions*, *The Imitation of Christ*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, — these she read lovingly and knew thoroughly. Favorites in the family were *Lays of Ancient Rome*, *Arabian Nights*, and, later, *The Book of Snobs*. Though she was no inveterate reader of fiction, she liked Scott, Dickens, and Bulwer. Thackeray's art she must have admired, but he was perhaps too much a man of the world for her warm sympathy. Even in poetry her enthusiasm was far from extravagant. Milton's great epic she did not like, despite its religious tone; but his sonnets appealed to her strongly. Nor for Wordsworth did she care. Perhaps among early nineteenth-century poets, her preferences were Coleridge and Shelley. Tennyson and Mrs. Browning she loved, and she admired Browning and Swinburne. She admired, too, rather than loved, Shakespeare. Early enthusi-

asms were Tasso and Metastasio, nor was she indifferent to Homer. She read Plato's *Dialogues* with growing interest. Finally, she would have been a disloyal Rossetti had she not been fondest of Dante. Once she exclaimed: "I wish I too could have done something for Dante in England! Maria wrote her fine and helpful book. William's translation of the *Divina Commedia*[1] is the best we have, and Gabriel's *Dante and his Circle* is a monument of loving labour that will outlast either. But I, alas, have neither the requisite knowledge nor the ability." Emphatically, she liked nothing trivial or coarse or unclean. She could not and would not read some authors. Amid his perfections Dante's coarsenesses were forgotten; to the license of lesser spirits or even Shakespeare she could not so readily shut her eyes.

Her literary acquaintance was similarly restricted. Vivacious, and, in her home circle "punctiliously polite," everywhere gracious, she was nevertheless reclusive. Of those she knew and liked best she saw little enough, but they are a unit in witnessing to her simple charm. Gabriel being, to say the least, very prominent among the Præraphaelites, she knew the five other artists composing the group — Hunt, Millais, Woolner, James Collinson, and F. G. Stephens. The number becomes sacred with William, the editor, "who should yet," Joseph Knight thinks, "be the laureate of the Brotherhood." In the order of time her circle comprised among others the following: Ford Madox Brown, Patmore, Masson, Burne-Jones, William Morris, Ruskin, the Rev. C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), Dr. Garnett, Browning, Swinburne, Jean Ingelow, Gosse, Watts-Dunton, Shields, Caine, William Bell Scott, Allingham, Adelaide Procter, Alexander Macmillan, Stillman, Anne Gilchrist, Hueffer, Sharp, and Mackenzie Bell.

As she went seldom into the world, she knew little of its great currents. Unlike Mrs. Browning, whom she never met, she kept her song pure poetry, unless it may be thought that the religious element makes much of it didactic. Stillman preferred through Gabriel a request that she would write poems of politics and philanthropy. Of the artistic impropriety of such themes she and Gabriel thought alike; but in a letter of 1870 she puts the matter in a different way: "It is not in me, and therefore it will never come out of me, to turn to politics or philanthropy with Mrs. Browning: such many-sidedness I leave to a greater than I, and,

[1] William utters a modest disclaimer; Christina thought Cayley's *Dante* in terza rima, he says, a far more important and satisfactory achievement than his.

having said my say, may well sit silent." As a woman rather than as a poet she was greatly interested in preventing vivisection, and actively solicited signatures to petitions with that purpose. An unsuccessful attempt was made by Mrs. Augusta Webster, a poet she highly valued, to interest her in woman suffrage. Of course Christina went to the Man of her counsel and found there nothing to warrant her interference with the order of things. She afterward referred to the incident as "a courteous tilt in the strong-minded woman lists." Of nations, after England, she liked best France and Italy, and, least, Austria. Had she taken any part in public affairs, she would have been a Conservative; but these things, too, she left to others.

To show her in her habit as she lived, a series of portraits were best; but the following facts are not without suggestion. Of medium height, she was first slender, and, later, like her father and mother, tended to become fleshy. She speaks more than once in a humorous vein of the incongruity of a "fat poetess." In complexion she was dark and colorless. Her hair was a glossy dark brown, and, like her mother's, so remained to the end. Bluish gray were her eyes — those of the poet — later "hazelled grey," with at last a hint of warm dark brown; always large, they were after 1870, by reason of exophthalmic bronchocele, at times "distressingly so." She had an uncommon expanse of forehead, as did the mother and the brothers, an intellectual rather than beautiful nose, sensuous lips, good mouth, strong chin — on the whole, a comely face. With delicate hands, she was finely feminine, not dainty. Her voice at its best was musical, her enunciation deliberate and distinct. Quite noticeable was her dignity, her modesty, her sincerity — in no way inviting familiarity. She was in manner rather undemonstrative, save with the incomparable mother. The final impression was that of a noble, not of a beautiful, woman, a woman whose pensive look was the effect of a life full of suffering and of unremitting contemplation of the rest which her soul desired.

Upon that rest she was now to enter — the sum of her anguish was complete. She craved literal rest. Though she had been a cheerful invalid, and displayed Christian fortitude serenely, she could not sympathize with the robust Browning attitude of ceaseless activity through cycles, making of the broken arcs perfect rounds. The quiet mystic preferred to sit ecstatic and adore. The old suffocating affection of the heart culminated in a disease if possible more grave. In May, 1892, an operation for cancer was successful. Temporary relief ensued; but in the fall of 1893 the

insidious malady recurred, with the complication of dropsy in the left arm and hand. She was driven to her bed in August, 1894, and did not leave it again. After great agony alike of body and of spirit — "the terrors of her religion compassed her about, to the overclouding of its radiances" — she passed into her rest 29 December, 1894, her lips to the last moving in prayer.

Her funeral was conducted in Christ Church, Woburn Square. Most of her *Advent* (p. 67) and the whole of her *And now why tarriest thou?* had been set to music by Mr. Frank Lowden, the organist, and were sung at that time.

"And Now Why Tarriest Thou?"

Lord, grant us grace to mount by steps of grace
From grace to grace nearer, my God, to Thee;
Not tarrying for to-morrow,
Lest we lie down in sorrow
And never see
Unveiled Thy Face.

Life is a vapour vanishing in haste;
Life is a day whose sun grows pale to set;
Life is a stint and sorrow,
One day and not the morrow;
Precious, while yet
It runs to waste.

Lord, strengthen us; lest fainting by the way
We come not to Thee, we who come from far;
Lord, bring us to that morrow
Which makes an end of sorrow,
Where all saints are
On holyday.

Where all the saints rest who have heard Thy call,
Have risen and striven and now rejoice in rest:
Call us too home from sorrow
To rest in Thee to-morrow;
In Thee our Best,
In Thee our All.

Before 1893.

Her weary body was laid to rest in beautiful Highgate Cemetery, whither the remains of father, mother, sister-in-law (Elizabeth

Eleanor Siddal, Gabriel's wife, died in 1862) had been previously conveyed. In her memory a reredos-painting by Mr. T. M. Rooke, from a design by Sir Edward Burne-Jones, has been placed in the church. The picture, "Christ uttering the words of consecration of the eucharistic elements, and the four Evangelists as recorders of the event," is eminently fitting.

In July, 1863, she had written a little poem of two stanzas, informed with her beautiful Christian humility. The second stanza was thought by the only survivor of the remarkable family the most appropriate inscription to mark her place of rest: —

The Lowest Place

Give me the lowest place; not that I dare
  Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
  Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
  That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
  My God and love Thee so.

25 July 1863.

Fitter, as we leave her, will it be to think of her in terms of the following exquisite lines: —

Life Hidden

Roses and lilies grow above the place
  Where she sleeps the long sleep that doth not dream.
If we could look upon her hidden face,
  Nor shadow would be there, nor garish gleam
  Of light; her life is lapsing like a stream
That makes no noise but floweth on apace
  Seawards, while many a shade and shady beam
Vary the ripples in their gliding chase.
She doth not see, but knows; she doth not feel,
  And yet is sensible; she hears no sound,
    Yet counts the flight of time and doth not err.
    Peace far and near, peace to ourselves and her:
  Her body is at peace in holy ground,
Her spirit is at peace where Angels kneel.

23 July 1849.

Sound Sleep

Some are laughing, some are weeping;
She is sleeping, only sleeping.
Round her rest wild flowers are creeping;
There the wind is heaping, heaping
Sweetest sweets of Summer's keeping,
By the corn-fields ripe for reaping.

There are lilies, and there blushes
The deep rose, and there the thrushes
Sing till latest sunlight flushes
In the west; a fresh wind brushes
Through the leaves while evening hushes.

There by day the lark is singing
And the grass and weeds are springing;
There by night the bat is winging;
There for ever winds are bringing
Far-off chimes of church-bells ringing.

Night and morning, noon and even,
Their sound fills her dreams with Heaven:
The long strife at length is striven:
Till her grave-bands shall be riven,
Such is the good portion given
To her soul at rest and shriven.

13 August 1849.

CRITICAL ESTIMATES

One of the saintliest of women, as well as one of our finest poets, passed into that rest for which she craved so long while, when Christina Rossetti died. Her life was a song of praise. This song had two strains. Both were ever present, but the austerer was the dominant and the more prolonged. For the last twenty years her muse has been cloistral; but at all times the pain of the world lay against her heart. When she was a girl, and when she was a woman old in suffering, in experience, and relatively old in years, she wrote in the same strain. A child-woman at sixteen, she already felt, with something of pain and much of bitterness, the poignancy of that old world-cry, "Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity!" An extraordinary lyric utterance from one so young, and, in externals, so happily circumstanced, is this sonnet, written before the author was seventeen: —

"Ah, woe is me for pleasure that is vain,
Ah, woe is me for glory that is past;
Pleasure that bringeth sorrow at the last,
Glory that at the last bringeth no gain!
So saith the sinking heart; and so again
It shall say till the mighty angel-blast
Is blown, making the sun and moon aghast,
And showering down the stars like sudden rain.
And evermore men shall go fearfully,
Bending beneath their weight of heaviness;
And ancient men shall lie down wearily,
And strong men shall rise up in weariness;
Yea, even the young shall answer sighingly,
Saying one to another: How vain it is!"

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At this point a singularly clear, rippling laugh interrupted the speaker. I recollect that I noticed at once its quality, as well as its spontaneity and winsomeness. This was followed by a few words, and pleased as I was by the laugh, I was more pleased by the words; that is, by the tone in which they were spoken. The voice had a bell-like sound, like that of resonant crystal. The pronunciation was unusually distinct, and the words came away from the mouth and lips as clearly as a trill from a bird. Though so exquisitely distinct, the voice was not in the least mannered or affected; and except for a peculiar lift in the intonation, more suggestive of Edinburgh than of London, there was no reason to suppose it was not that of an Englishwoman.

"Ah," she said, "there comes in the delightful enthusiast. But, Mrs. ——, I assure you that your good heart is mistaken. There are hundreds and thousands of us who, for one reason or another, never escape from London. I may speak for myself, alas, who am not only as confirmed a Londoner as was Charles Lamb, but really doubt if it would be good for me, now, to sojourn long or often in the country; and you must remember that there are more Lambs than Wordsworths among us town folk, and that as we are bred so we live."

"But," broke in the lady to whom she was speaking, "you must yourself admit that you would be far happier in the peace and beauty of the country, which is so infinitely more poetic, in every way so much more beautiful, than the town!"

How cool and quiet the bell-like voice sounded, after the impetuous utterance which had interrupted it! "I am of those

who think with Bacon that the Souls of the Living are the Beauty of the World."

"That is a beautiful saying; but now let me ask, do not you yourself find your best inspiration in the country?"

"I?" with a sweet, low, deprecating laugh. "Oh dear, no! I know it *ought* to be so. But I don't derive my inspiration, as you call it, — though, if you will allow me to say so, I think the word quite inappropriate, and to be used of very few, and then only in a most literal and sacred sense, — I don't derive anything from the country at first hand! Why, my knowledge of what is called nature is that of the town sparrow, or, at most, that of the pigeon which makes an excursion occasionally from its home in Regent's Park or Kensington Gardens. And, what is more, I am fairly sure that I am in the place that best suits me. After all, we may enjoy the magic and mystery of ocean without ever adventuring upon it; and I, and thousands of other Londoners, from the penniless to those who are as relatively poor as I am, are in the position of those who love the sea, and understand too, in a way, its beauty and wonder, even though we reside in Whitechapel or Bloomsbury."

I forget what followed, but a minute or two later the door opened, and another visitor was announced. The servant returned immediately with a lamp. As she did so, I caught a glimpse of my sweet-voiced neighbor, — a short, plain woman, apparently advanced in middle age, with, as the most striking feature at a first glance, long, heavy eyelids over strangely protrusive eyes. I noticed that she veiled herself abruptly, as she rose and said good-by. As she moved away, it was with what I can describe only as an awkward grace.

One thing after another interfered with the question that was on my lips, and the outcome was that I left without knowing who the lady was whose words and voice had impressed me so much. Two things remained with me beyond that day: not, strangely enough, primarily, the memory of the delicate precision and natural rhythm of her speech or the peculiar quality of her voice, but the rapid, almost furtive way in which she had drawn her veil over her too conspicuous eyes, as soon as the room was lighted, and her concurrent haste to be gone, — this, and the quotation from Bacon, "The Souls of the Living are the Beauty of the World." It is a noble saying, and its significance would then have been enhanced for me if I had known that I heard it for the first time from the lips of Christina Rossetti.

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Much impressed by *The Dead City*, I asked Rossetti to lend me his copy of the booklet in question. He had, however, no copy. It was then that he suggested I should request the loan of Christina's, and added, on my reply that I did not know her, "Well, you certainly ought to know her. She is the finest woman-poet since Mrs. Browning, by a long way; and in artless art, if not in intellectual impulse, is greatly Mrs. Browning's superior. She couldn't write, or have written, the Sonnets from the Portuguese, but neither could Mrs. Browning have composed some of the flawless lyrics which Christina has written."

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With an exquisitely clear and vibrant voice, though with a singular rise and fall, correspondent to Gabriel Rossetti's moving and sonorous organ music, Miss Rossetti read, with infinite feeling, the lines beginning, "As I in hoary winter's night stood shivering in the snow." Occasionally she prolonged the music of a line into a slow rhythm, with a strange suspiration that, I imagine, was characteristic, particularly when she was strongly moved. It was in this way that — late in 1885 or early in 1886 — I heard her read the lyric beginning, —

> "Heaven's chimes are slow, but sure to strike at last;
> Earth's sands are slow, but surely dropping through:
> And much we have to suffer, much to do,
> Before the time be past," —

with, I recollect, an unexpected and haunting iterance of the line, —

> "*Chimes that keep time are neither slow nor fast;*"

each word as complete and separate in enunciation as notes of music slowly struck on the piano.

There was one line of Southwell's in particular which she read with communicative emotion, — an emotion felt by Mrs. Rossetti, who opened her eyes, glanced at her daughter, and, with murmuring lips, reclosed her eyes. It was the line, —

"*Love is the fire, and sighs the smoke, the ashes shame and scorns.*"

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. . . Most of her letters to me are too personal for publicity; but here, from one written in 1886, is a point of interest concerning Christina Rossetti the poet: "I heartily agree in setting the essence

of poetry above the form " This point she extended on a later occasion, when she said that the whole question of the relative value of the poetic spirit of a poem and the form of that poem lay in this: that the spirit could exist without the form, whereas the form was an impossibility without the spirit, of which it was the lovely body.

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The weight of the pain of the world, of the sorrow of life, had long made hard the blithe cheerfulness which she wore so passing well, though it was no garment chosen for its own comeliness, but because of its refreshment for others. An ordered grace was hers in all things, and in this matter of cheerfulness she created what she did not inherit; rather, she gained, by prayer and renunciation and long control, a sunlit serenity which made her mind, for others, a delectable Eden, and her soul a paradise of fragrance and song. Cheerfulness became a need of spiritual growth, as well as a thing seemly and delightful in itself. She had ever, in truth, at least in later life (and my acquaintanceship with her extended through a period of over twelve years), a gracious sweetness that was all her own. An exquisite taciturnity alternated with a not less exquisite courtesy of self-abandonment. She was too humble to speak much opinionatively, unless directly challenged or skillfully allured; while it seemed natural in her to consider that the centre of interest was in her companion of the moment, and not in herself. Habitually she preferred the gold-glooms of silence, but would, at the word of appeal, or even at that shyer lure which can express itself only through the eyes, come into the more garish light, or, as it might be, the dusk of another's sorrow, or the starry cold of another's grief. It was impossible to have with her even the least degree of intimacy, and not experience this quietude of charm, — a quality that made her so remote of approach, but so near when reached. How often, thinking of her, I have considered those lines of Herbert's —

> " Welcome, deare feast of Lent : who loves not thee
> He loves not Temperance, or Authoritie,
> * * * * * * * *
> Besides the cleannesse of sweet abstinence,
> Quick thoughts and motions at a small expense,
> A face not fearing light."

This " cleannesse of sweet abstinence " was characteristic of the poetic inheritor of Herbert and Crashaw, whom most she resembles

in the quality of her genius, though she had more of fire and heat than the one, and less of sensuous exuberance than the other.

This is not the occasion for any critical analysis of her beautiful poetry. Its delicate music, its exquisite charm, are its proper ambassadors. Of her marvellous spontaneous art scarce anything better could be said by the most authoritative and discriminating critic than is expressed in these lines of Shakespeare (*The Winter's Tale*) : —

> "This is an art
> Which does mend nature, change it rather, but
> The art itself is nature."

* * * * * * * *

As I came away from the funeral service . . . a stanza in one of her latest lyrics made a music in my mind : —

> "Life that was born to die
> Sets heart on high,
> And counts and mounts
> Steep stages of the sky.
> Two things, Lord, I desire
> And I require:
> Love's name, and flame
> To wrap my soul in fire."

Wrapt in fire, indeed, was that pure and perfect spirit, that disembodied soul of song. — William Sharp, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June, 1895.

Woman, for some reason which seems to have escaped the philosopher, has never taken a prominent position in the history of poetry. . . . That Shakspere should have had no female rival, that the age in which music burdened every bough, and in which poets made their appearance in hundreds, should have produced not a solitary authentic poetess, even of the fifth rank, this is curious indeed.

. . . So far as we can observe, the strength of the great poet-women has been in their selection. . . . One very gifted and ambitious Englishwoman of the last generation, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, essayed to [impress us by her bulk and volume]. But her success, it must be admitted, grows every day more dubious. Where she strove to be passionate she was too often hysterical ; a sort of scream spoils the effect of all her full tirades. She remains

readable mainly where she is exquisite, and one small volume would suffice to contain her probable bequest to posterity.

It is no new theory that women, in order to succeed in poetry, must be brief, personal, and concentrated. . . . [Sappho] is the type of the woman-poet who exists not by reason of the variety or volume of her work, but by virtue of its intensity, its individuality, its artistic perfection.

At no time was it more necessary to insist on this truth than it is to-day. . . . Everything that occurs to the poet seems, to-day, to be worth writing down and printing. . . . The women who write, in particular, pursued by that commercial fervor which is so curious a feature of our new literary life, and which sits so inelegantly on a female figure, are in a ceaseless hurry to work off and hurry away into oblivion those qualities of their style which might, if seriously and coyly guarded, attract a permanent attention.

Among the women who have written verse in the Victorian age there is not one by whom this reproach is less deserved than it is by Miss Rossetti. Severely true to herself, an artist of conscientiousness as high as her skill is exquisite, she has never swept her fane to sea in a flood of her own outpourings. In the following pages I desire to pay no more than a just tribute of respect to one of the most perfect poets of the age, — not one of the most powerful, of course, nor one of the most epoch-making, but to one of the most perfect, — to a writer toward whom we may not unreasonably expect that students of English literature in the twenty-fourth century may look back as the critics of Alexandria did toward Sappho and toward Erinna.

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In . . . the volume of 1847 we see more than the germ; we see the imperfect development of two qualities which have particularly characterized the poetry of Miss Rossetti — in the first an entirely direct and vivid mode of presenting to us the impression of richly colored physical objects, a feat in which she sometimes rivals Keats and Tennyson; and in the second a brilliant simplicity in the conduct of episodes of a visionary character, and a choice of expression which is exactly in keeping with these.

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Of her seven pieces . . . printed in *The Germ* in 1850, when she was twenty, there are five (if we omit *A Pause of Thought* and *Repining*) which rank to this day among her very finest lyrics, and display her style as absolutely formed. Though the youngest

poet of the confraternity, she appears indeed in *The Germ* as the most finished, and even, for the moment, the most promising.

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The two long pieces she has written, her two efforts at a long breath, are sustained so well as to make us regret that she has not put out her powers in the creation of a still more complete and elaborated composition. Of these two poems *Goblin Market* is by far the more popular; the other, *The Prince's Progress*, which appeared in 1866, has never attracted such attention as it deserves. It is not necessary to describe a poem so well known to every lover of verse as *Goblin Market*.

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With the apparent exceptions of *Goblin Market* and *The Prince's Progress*, both of which indeed are of a lyrical nature, Miss Rossetti has written only lyrics. All poets are unequal, except the bad ones, who are uniformly bad. Miss Rossetti indulges in the privilege which Wordsworth, Burns, and so many great masters have enjoyed, of writing extremely flat and dull poems at certain moments, and of not perceiving that they are dull or flat. She does not err in being mediocre; her lyrics are bad or good, and the ensuing remarks deal with that portion only of her poems with which criticism is occupied in surveying work so admirably original as hers; namely, that which is worthy of her reputation. Her lyrics, then, are eminent for their glow of coloring, their vivid and novel diction, and for a certain penetrating accent, whether in joy or pain, which rivets the attention. Her habitual tone is one of melancholy revery, the pathos of which is strangely intensified by her appreciation of beauty and pleasure. . . . Her customary music is sad, often poignantly sad. Her lyrics have that *desiderium*, that obstinate longing for something lost out of life, which Shelley's have, although her Christian faith gives her regret a more resigned and sedate character than his possesses. In the extremely rare gift of song-writing Miss Rossetti has been singularly successful. Of the poets of our time she stands next Lord Tennyson in this branch of the art, in the spontaneous and complete quality of her *lieder*, and in their propriety for the purpose of being sung. At various times this art has flourished in our race; eighty years ago most of the poets could write songs, but it is almost a lost art in our generation. The songs of our living poets are apt to be over-polished or under-polished, so simple as to be bald, or else so elaborate as to be wholly unsuitable for singing. But such a song as this is not un-

worthy to be classed with the melodies of Shakspere, of Burns, of Shelley: —

Oh, roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy-branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Oh, violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.

* * * * * * * *

From the first a large section of Miss Rossetti's work has been occupied with sacred and devotional themes. Through this most rare and difficult department of the art, which so few essay without breaking on the Scylla of doctrine on the one hand, or being whirled in the Charybdis of commonplace dullness on the other, she has steered with extraordinary success. Her sacred poems are truly sacred, and yet not unpoetical. As a religious poet of our time she has no rival but Cardinal Newman, and it could only be schismatic prejudice or absence of critical faculty which should deny her a place, as a poet, higher than that of our exquisite master of prose. To find her exact parallel it is at once her strength and her snare that we must go back to the middle of the seventeenth century. She is the sister of George Herbert; she is of the family of Crashaw, of Vaughan, of Wither.[1]

. . . It is difficult to express how much English literature has lost by the death of Christina Rossetti. . . . Miss Rossetti was not merely the greatest poet among Englishwomen of our day, she was a writer who can be classed with all but the very greatest poets of the century. Her art was of that admirable kind which conceals the process of art; never was verse so careful to seem careless; and she was not less remarkable for the passionate intensity of her emotion — generally religious emotion — than for the intense simplicity of its expression. Her genius, like her life, was somewhat remote from ordinary worldly interests; what she wrote was written with but little thought of fame, and much of it for a public concerned rather with the devotional than with the artistic aspect of her work. — *The Athenæum*, January 5, 1895.

[1] Used by permission of Dodd, Mead & Co.; from *Critical Kit-Kats*, by Edmund Gosse.

. . . It is the conviction of one whose high privilege it was to know her in many a passage of sorrow and trial that of all the poets who have lived and died within our time, Christina Rossetti must have had the noblest soul.

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While Christina's poetical work may be described as being all symbolical, she was not much given, like her brother, to reading symbols into the every-day incidents of life. Gabriel, on the contrary, though using symbolism in his poetry in only a moderate degree, allowed his instinct for symbolizing his own life to pass into positive superstition. . . .

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. . . Her intimacy with Nature — of a different kind altogether from that of Wordsworth and Tennyson — was of the kind that I have described on a previous occasion as Sufeyistic: she loved the beauty of this world, but not entirely for itself; she loved it on account of its symbols of another world beyond. And yet she was no slave to the ascetic side of Christianity. No doubt there was mixed with her spiritualism, or perhaps underlying it, a rich sensuousness that under other circumstances of life would have made itself manifest, and also a rare potentiality of deep passion. It is this, indeed, which makes the study of her great and noble nature so absorbing.

. . . It is . . . a mistake to speak of Christina Rossetti as being a great poetic artist. Exquisite as her best things are, no one had a more uncertain hand than she when at work. Here, as in so many things, she was like Blake, whose influence upon her was very great.

Of self-criticism she had almost nothing. . . . Here is where she was wonderfully unlike Gabriel, whose power of self-criticism in poetry was almost as great as Tennyson's own. But in the matter of inspiration she was, I must think, above Gabriel — above almost everybody. If English rhymed metres had been as easy to work in as Italian rhymed metres, her imagination was so vivid, her poetic impulse was so strong, and, indeed, her poetic wealth so inexhaustible, that she would have stood in the front rank of English poets. But the writer of English rhymed measures is in a very different position as regards improvisatorial efforts from the Italian who writes in rhymed measures. He has to grapple with the metrical structure — to seize the form by the throat, as it were, and force it to take in the enormous wealth at the English poet's command. . . . On the other hand, however, it may be said that a special

quality of her verse is a *curiosa felicitas*, which makes a metrical blemish tell as a kind of suggestive grace. — Theodore Watts [-Dunton], in *The Athenæum*, January 5, 1895.

. . . But it was not until the appearance of *Goblin Market and other Poems* (1862), that her reputation was established. Though she published several more volumes, both of prose and of verse, this still represents the high-water mark of her achievement. The similarity to her brother's poetry, in weirdness of imagination and in pictorial minuteness, has often been pointed out. But the difference is greater than the resemblance. Christina possessed the gift of spontaneity which Dante Gabriel lacked. In perfection of form and melody of words, her lyrics are comparable to those of Shelley: they set themselves to mental music as they are being read. No poet of the time, not Tennyson nor Swinburne — though their range may be far wider — excels her in the mere matter of technique. None has such a pure note, such a bird-like sweetness. — *The Academy*, January 5, 1895.

. . . Miss Rossetti's gifts, unfairly, as I think, obscured for some time by the marvellous genius of her brother, have none the less won recognition in the hearts of many men. Her poetry has always been reticent and unassuming, but always stamped with a rare distinction, a perfection of form, and an elevation of spirit which are as welcome as flowers in May. It is with a pride of possession that one puts her new volume upon the shelf, to return to again and again for refreshment of the appropriate mood.

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. . . She displays also a remarkable command of metrical form. As of old, the sonnet seems to be the mode of expression most natural to her: a sonnet constructed with infinite art, with the very spirit of music in its rhythms, and with a subtle and audacious disposition of irregular accents to dispel all danger of monotony. But outside this special sphere she is at her ease alike with the simplest lyric and the most complicated stanza. — Edmund K. Chambers, in *The Academy*, February 24, 1894.

But our present concern is to thank Messrs. Macmillan for a volume which we need not name "Goblin Market" or "A Pageant," but our *Christina Rossetti*. Here in four hundred and fifty clearly printed pages, we have the exquisite product of a life which cannot

yet have left off singing, poems of as fair an art, lyrics of as fresh a note, dreams of as strange a phantasy, as ever made blessed the English tongue.

To say that Miss Rossetti is the greatest English poet among women is to pay regard to a distinction which, in questions of art, is purely arbitrary — a distinction which has given us the foolish word "poetess," a standing witness in our language to the national obtuseness. How little must the artistic constitution — the third sex — be understood among a people with such a word in their dictionary. How inorganic such distinctions are, of course, needs no illustration, though, if such were necessary, Miss Christina Rossetti's genius would form an admirable text; for, to my mind, she is, in right of its rarest quality, our one imaginative descendant of the magician of *Kubla Khan*. No English poet till the appearance of *Goblin Market* ever again found the hidden door to Xanadhu save she. Keats and Tennyson, and he who saw "the curled moon"

> "like a little feather
> Fluttering far down the gulf,"

have had rarer glimpses of that land "East of the Sun and West of the Moon." William Allingham wrote one or two fairy poems haunted with its strange light — poems which also bear an odd physiognomical resemblance to *Goblin Market;* but only Coleridge and Christina Rossetti have walked in it as their native clime.

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. . . A gift of simple singing, an artless perfection of art, a pulse of unpremeditated passion, an ideal spiritual exaltation — all these powers go to the making of these poems, with a spontaneity in their exercise rare indeed in our self-conscious age. In no other modern poet is "the fine careless rapture" so surely heard.

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Of what I have called its artless art one of its defects seems to me a proof — the occasional lapses into prose, even into commonplace. Sometimes in her best poems we come across a word insensitive or out of colour. This, obviously, cannot be from lack of the power of art, it can only be because her exercise of the power is mainly unconscious. We find the same flaws in the early work of Keats; but he, on the other hand, soon learned to train his song by a mature study of style. I should say, however, that Miss Rossetti has never done this; and so great is her instinctive power of art that she has really been able to afford the neglect, her poetry

retaining thereby a charming *naiveté* which by a self-conscious culture might have been lost to us.

I have so far spoken of the essential qualities of Miss Rossetti's poetry without reference to her wide range of theme, which is none the less a significant consideration, significant usually of a power of large handling. Dream-allegories such as *Goblin Market*, or that of the Prince who "loitered on the road too long" and lost his lady; ballads of the sweet old-world model, like *Maude Clare*, idylls of to-day such as *Maggie a Lady;* exquisite country-pictures — these are what we have long since found side by side with spiritual allegories such as *Up-Hill*, poems of religious ecstasy such as *The Convent Threshold,* and all the pages "ypoudred" with lyrics as that old meadow was "with daysé." Lyrics, lyrics, singing everywhere like brooks, jubilant with the joy of earth, tremulous with love's tears, buoyant with faith and prayer.

Miss Rossetti has written a sequence of love-sonnets — the *Monna Innominata* — which certainly should have place by those "from the Portuguese;" but no one else in our day has given us her

> ". . . chants as of a lonely thrush's throat
> At latest eve,
> What does in such calm note
> Both joy and grieve;
> Notes few and strong and fine,
> Gilt with sweet day's decline,
> And sad with promise of a different sun."
>
> —Richard Le Gallienne, in *The Academy*, February 7, 1891.

It is not the least of the glories of English poetry that two women should be numbered among the singers whom we most love and honor. It is perhaps idle to inquire whether Mrs. Browning or Miss Rossetti is to be esteemed the greater poet; the one thing certain is that no other English woman is to be named in the same breath with them. These two stand far apart from the throng, lifted above it by inspiration and achievement, and no account of the greater poetry of our century can ignore them. If there is something more instinctive, more inevitable in impulse, about the work of Mrs. Browning, there is more of restraint and of artistic finish about the work of Miss Rossetti. The test of popularity would assign to the former the higher rank, just as it would place Byron above Keats and Coleridge, or above Wordsworth and Shelley; but the critic has better tests than the noisy verdicts of the multitude, and those tests lessen, if they do not quite do away with, the seeming disparity between the fame of the two women.

The longer pieces which introduce Miss Rossetti's three volumes are not the most successful of their contents. It is rather to the lyrics, ballads, and sonnets that the lover of poetry will turn to find her at her best. Who, for example, could once read and ever forget such a sonnet as *Rest?*

> " O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes;
> Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
> Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
> With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
> She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
> Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
> Of all that irked her from the hour of birth,
> With stillness that is almost Paradise.
> Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
> Silence more musical than any song;
> Even her very heart hath ceased to stir:
> Until the morning of Eternity
> Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
> And when she wakes she will not think it long."

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If in most of the provinces of the lyric realm Miss Rossetti's verse challenges comparison with that of our greater singers, it is in the religious province that the challenge is most imperative and her mastery most manifest. Not in Keble or Newman, not in Herbert or Vaughan, do we find a clearer or more beautiful expression of the religious sentiment than is dominant in Miss Rossetti's three books. In this respect, at least, she is unsurpassed, and perhaps unequalled, by any of her contemporaries. In her devotional pieces there is no touch of affectation, artificiality, or insincerity. Such poems as *The Three Enemies* and *Advent* in the first volume, *Paradise* and *The Lowest Place* in the second, and many of the glorious lyrics and sonnets of the third, will long be treasured among the religious classics of the English language.—*The Dial*, January 16, 1895.

By the death of Christina Rossetti literature, and not English literature alone, has lost the one great modern poetess. . . . In Miss Rossetti we have a poet among poets, and in Miss Rossetti alone. Content to be merely a woman, wise in limiting herself within somewhat narrow bounds, she possessed, in union with a profoundly emotional nature, a power of artistic self-restraint which no other woman who has written in verse, except the supreme Sappho, has ever shown; and it is through this mastery over her

own nature, this economy of her own resources, that she takes rank among poets rather than among poetesses.

. . . A power of seeing finely beyond the scope of ordinary vision ; that, in a few words, is this note of Miss Rossetti's genius, and it brings with it a subtle and as if instinctive power of expressing subtle and yet as if instinctive conceptions ; always clearly, always simply, with a singular and often startling homeliness, which is the sincerity of a style that seems to be innocently unaware of its own beauty. This power is shown in every division of her poetry ; in the peculiar witchery of the poems dealing with the supernatural, in the exaltation of the poems of devotion, in the lyrical quality of the songs of children, birds, and corn, in the special variety and the special excellence of the poems of passion and meditation. The union of homely yet always select literalness of treatment with mystical visionariness, or visionariness which is sometimes mystical, constitutes the peculiar quality of her poetry.—Arthur Symons, in *Studies in Two Literatures*, as quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism.*

If the partial temporary eclipse, which is overshadowing the fame of Mrs. Browning, should ever come upon the fame of Miss Rossetti, it will be for a very different reason. Mrs. Browning's faults of workmanship, her sometimes restless and spasmodic manner, her lapses into melodrama and turbidity, though more than counterbalanced by her distinguished excellencies, are yet grievous obstacles to her hopes of a foremost place among the poets of this century. But Miss Rossetti, artist through and through, mistress of her craft, faultless in tone and taste, completely conscious of her powers and of their extent, may suffer awhile, in coming generations which know her not, from the intensely personal limitations, the wonderfully individual intuitions of her Uranian Muse. Doubtless her poems . . include many a piece of airy fantasy, many a laughing lyric, many a poem born of external circumstance ; but her characteristic greatness lies in her most intimate, most severe, most passionate and sacred poems : in the work which sets her in the company of Herbert, Vaughan, the converted Donne, Crashaw, Father Southwell, the divine Herrick, Cardinal Newman. And by this it is not meant that her obviously and ostensibly sacred poems are alone her greatest : many others, poems of meditation or of passion, with no distinct Christian cry in them, stand side by side with the poems divine and devout. Her fair and stern philosophy of life, which never fails to draw to itself her choicest powers of

art, is that which marks out her poetry for distinction and for admiration. Her more external work, with its gayeties and beautiful imaginings, is full of delights. . . .

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[The poems not religious] show her style in process of formation, but not her imaginative bent and intensity: that, from first to last, set firmly in the same one direction, toward lyrical intensity, whether in brief dramatic story, in song of bright or solemn music, in pieces of pondering contemplation; above all, in sonnets massive, poignant, most memorable. Her sonnets have, far beyond most, that singleness of a dominant emotion, piercingly felt and craving expression, joined to a rich magnificence of strict rhythm, which is the sonnet's perfect praise. . . . Though there be here some poems, perhaps too tentative or slight for publication, there is nothing to distress us, nothing that shows us Miss Rossetti growing, as Keats and Shelley grew from vile poetasters to superb poets. — Lionel Johnson, in *The Academy*, July 25, 1896.

There is assuredly but one opinion as to the poet who has lately passed from earth, though that opinion varies in degree. All who have human hearts confess her to be a sad and a sweet poet, all who have a sense of poetry know how rare was the quality of poetry in her — how spiritual and how sensuous — somewhat thin, somewhat dispread in her laxer writing, but perfectly strong, perfectly impassioned in her best. To the name of poet her right is so sure that proof of it is to be found everywhere in her "unconsidered ways," and always irrefutably . . . Christina Rossetti always drew near from the side of poetry; from what to us, who are not altogether poets, is the further side. She came from beyond those hills. She is not often on the heights, but all her access is by poetry. Of few indeed is this so true.

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. . . She proves herself an artist, a possessor of the weighty matters of the law of art, despite the characteristic carelessness with which she played by ear. . . .

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. . . The poet and saint who has now passed from a world she never loved, lived a life of sacrifice, suffered many partings, unreluctantly endured the pains of her spirituality; but she kept,

in their quickness, her simple and natural love of love and hope of joy for another time. Such sufferings as hers do indeed refuse, but they have not denied, delight. Delight is all their faith. — Mrs. Meynell, in *Littell's Living Age*, Vol. 204.

Towards the close of her life she became almost a recluse; her mind dwelt solely upon her religion, her verses became exclusively devotional, and her time was given up to acts of charity. She was then very brown in complexion, and somewhat startling in aspect, because a disease caused her eyes to protrude. She dressed in deep black, and spoke with precision, pausing for words with her head a little on one side. A half-humorous, half-introspective smile was never far from her lips. In an atmosphere of shadow, in a home overshadowed by the tall trees of a London square, she was a figure not so much striking as penetrating, and, in face of her self-possession, her deliberate and rare movements, her clear and bell-like enunciation — it was difficult to realize that one had in front of one either a great poet or a woman suffering from more than one painful and lingering disease, from great bereavments, and, above all, from very terrible religious fears.

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The expression of moods — that, after all, is the only business of the lyric poet. And when he has conveyed these moods to others, he has succeeded. It is very decidedly not his business to look at things on the large scale, "to write poetic," to be more impracticable, frenzied, or romantic than Nature has made him. He has to appeal rather than to overwhelm, to hang in the ear rather than to sweep you away with organ peals. It is for these reasons that Christina Rossetti deserves to live.

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Christina Rossetti arrayed herself very little in the panoply of poetic phrases; she wrote as she spoke. And, indeed, when she was in the mood, she wrote nearly as easily as she spoke. . . . And it is the distinguishing characteristic of her best poems that they open always with a line that is just a remark, not the "strong first line" of a song. She seems to utter a little sentence like, "I wonder if the sap is stirring yet," and the spring is presented. For the most part she kept to that conversational key.

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. . . If Christina Rossetti suppressed, as far as she was able, whatever was sensual and joyous in the matter and in the temperament of her poems, her faculty for pure delight and for æsthetic enjoyment was expressed all the more strongly in her metre. For her verse is neither musical nor lyrical, it has not the unconscious quality of "lilt," or of the song that merely bubbles. It is rhythmical and even intricate ; it is a faculty that, coming from very deep in the sources of enjoyment, moves us for deep and unexplained reasons just as the rhythms of music do. If it has not the quality of lilt, it has not the defect ; it is never mechanical with numbered syllables. A distinguished French critic has lately discovered that the distinguishing quality of English metre is its (musical rhythmical) rests, not its (metrical-stressed) accents. It is exciting as much on account of the accents it misses as of those it meets. . .

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Yet when it was appropriate, her verse contrived to be quite sufficiently close in its assonances, its vowel effects, and its chromatic texture. Her skill in true rhymes was only equalled by her delicacy in using false ones — those delicious things that there are still miscreants hard-hearted enough to reprehend.

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It is seldom safe to prophesy how an artist will stand with the Future ; and it is always dangerous to attempt to place him in relation to his great contemporaries. . . . My personal pleasure in her work is so great that I will not approach the "placing." But she had one characteristic which should make her gain upon all her distinguished contemporaries — she held aloof from all the problems of her day. . . .

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Christina Rossetti, with her introspection, studied her soul ; with her talent she rendered it until she became the poet of the suffering — and suffering is a thing of all the ages. . . . (It is hardly necessary to say that to call this temperament morbid is to be unreflecting. Morbidness is a dwelling on suffering for wantonness' sake ; it is to find a joy in gloating on sorrows, and is a sensual pursuit like any other self-indulgence.) — Ford Madox Hueffer, in *The Fortnightly Review*, March, 1904.

THE PASSING OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

It was little for her to die,
  For her to whom breath was prayer,
For her who had long put by
    Earth-desire;
Who had knelt in the Holy Place
  And had drunk the incense-air,
Till her soul to seek God's face
    Leapt like fire.

It was only to slip her free
  Of the vestal raiment worn
O'er the lengthening lily lea
    Toward the west,
For a robe more lustrous white
  By the sunset spirits borne
From mansions jewel-bright
    Of her rest.

It was only to shift her clime,
  Clinging still to the harp of gold,
Fairy-gift of her cradle-time,
    Angel-gift,
Of a strain so thrilling rare
  We shall hunger on earthly wold
And listen if down the air
    Echoes drift.

It was little for her to pass
  From this storm-sea, well sufficed
With celestial sea of glass,
    Sea of sky;
To change the dream and the spur
  For the truth, the goal, the Christ.
Oh, but it was for her
    Much to die.

— KATHARINE LEE BATES, from *America the Beautiful and Other Poems*, published by T. Y. Crowell and Company.

There are reasons for not subscribing to the claim more than once put forward in Miss Rossetti's behalf to take rank beside the great Mrs. Browning. The caliber of mind required for the production of such works as *Casa Guidi Windows*, *Mother and Poet*, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, etc. (not to name *Aurora Leigh*, the sacred dramas, and the incomparable second translation of the

Prometheus), is bigger than the caliber of mind demanded for the creation of such poems as *Goblin Market*, *The Prince's Progress*, and many of the smaller and more perfectly gem-like poems of Miss Rossetti. Nor can I see that the *powers* of expression exhibited by Mrs. Browning were less superior to those shown as yet by Miss Rossetti than her exhibited powers of idealisation were: — simply, Miss Rossetti has betrayed a *keener sense of the necessity* of execution than Mrs. Browning did; not a greater *executive ability*, not even as great an executive ability, for the intuitive manipulation of Mrs. Browning is, in numerous cases, not short of perfection. — H. Buxton Forman, in *Our Living Poets*, as quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism.*

Poverty of ideas cannot be imputed to Christina Rossetti, but the bulk of her poetry, rich as it is in music and colour, is fitter for the cloister than the hearth. In *Goblin Market*, however, she was able to clothe her mystic thought in an objective shape, and, while displaying all her wonted lyrical charm, to give an insight into natures beyond the confines of humanity, a power also evinced in Cardinal Newman's nearly contemporary *Dream of Gerontius.* — Richard Garnett, in *The Reign of Queen Victoria*, as quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism.*

. . . Miss Rossetti's ear was close to nature; she listened for its simple voices, and uttered the sounds just as she heard them. Her Nature poetry is thus saturated with the greenness and freshness of spring, or bright with the glamour of summer. There is nothing strained or affected about it; it is as natural as Nature herself. By virtue of this spontaneous natural flow it is the true *Fountain Arethuse:* there has been nothing like it since Herrick. . . . The keynote of much of Miss Rossetti's word-music is its æsthetic mysticism and rich melancholy. . . . Countless passages in these poems illustrate that pure, warm ecstasy of early Italian colouring which Rossetti's brush has immortalised for us. . . . But it is specially in the *Prince's Progress* that Miss Rossetti's subtle and mysterious art finds its most perfect expression. . . . Miss Rossetti . . . though rarely posing as teacher, philosopher, or moralist, is yet always a consummate artist; open her pages where we will, we must needs light upon beauty. Mrs. Browning was never restrained by any apprehension of treating a subject inartistically. Whatever she felt or thought was expressed, small matter how. Sometimes it came in a never-to-be-forgotten word-music,

but just as often in prose that passed for the poetry it should have been. Miss Rossetti, on the contrary, treated everything as only an artist could treat it. — Alice Law, in *Westminster Review*, Vol. 143, as quoted in *The Library of Literary Criticism*.

Christina Rossetti's *mise-en-scène* is a place of gardens, orchards, wooded dingles, with a churchyard in the distance. The scene shifts a little, but the spirit never wanders far afield ; and it is certainly singular that one who lived out almost the whole of her life in a city so majestic, sober, and inspiriting as London, should never bring the consciousness of streets and thoroughfares and populous murmur into her writings. She, whose heart was so with birds and fruits, cornfields and farmyard sounds, never even revolts against or despairs of the huge desolation, the laborious monotony of a great town. She does not sing as a caged bird, with exotic memories of freedom stirred by the flashing water, the hanging groundsel of her wired prison, but with a wild voice with visions only limited by the rustic conventionalities of toil and tillage. The dewy English woodland, the sharp silences of winter, the gloom of low-hung clouds, and the sigh of weeping rain are her backgrounds ; and it is strange that one of Italian blood should manifest no alien longings for warm and sun-dried lands. . . . The critic of future ages, if he was presented with the works of Mrs. Browning and Miss Rossetti, and a history of their lives, would, it may be said, acting on internal evidence only, assign such poems as "Aurora Leigh," and the "Casa Guidi Windows," to Miss Rossetti, and trace the natural heartbeats which still thrilled for the home of her origin, — and equally attribute the essentially English character of Miss Rossetti's feeling to the English poetess. It is a strange thing that the two greatest of English poetesses should have, so to speak, so passionately adopted each other's country as their own.

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. . . Miss Rossetti's poems are so passionately human a document as to set one tracing by a sort of inevitable instinct the secrets of a buoyant and tender soul, sharpened and refined by blow after blow of harsh discipline. The same autobiographical savor haunts all her work as haunted the eager dramas of Charlotte Brontë, perhaps the first of women-writers of every age. Step by step it reveals itself, the sad and stately development of the august soul. The first tremulous outlook upon the intolerable loveliness of life, the fantastic melancholy of youth, the deep desire of love, the drawing nearer to the veiled star, disappointment, disillusion-

ment, the overpowering rush of the melancholy that had waited, like a beast in ambush, for moments of lassitude and reaction. Then was the crisis; would the wounded life creep on on a broken wing, or would the spiritual vitality suffice to fill the intolerable void? It did suffice; and the strength of the character that thus found repose was attested by the rational and temperate form of faith that ministered to the failing soul.

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Into the service of her religion, Miss Rossetti brought all the passionate fervor of her unsatisfied heart, all her intense enthusiasm after art, and passed steadily, we believe, to the forefront of all English religious poetry. She had not perhaps the curious felicity of George Herbert, but on the other hand she had the balanced simplicity that stepped clear of his elaborate conceit, the desperate euphuism of Crashaw, and even the pathetic refinement of Henry Vaughan. . . .

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Lastly, of all the great themes with which Miss Rossetti deals she is, above all writers, the singer of death. Whether as the eternal home-coming, or the quiet relief after the intolerable restlessness of the world, or as the deep reality in which the fretful vanities of life are merged, it is always in view, as the dark, majestic portal to which the weary road winds at last. — A. C. Benson, in *Littell's Living Age*, Vol. 204.

. . . [Christina Rossetti's] is a name which will throw upon every page where it appears a blush of poetic light as rare as the 'shadow of Israfeel's wing' in the Arabian story . . . the time will come — it *must* come — when every authoritative word about one so beloved, every scrap of testimony from every witness, howsoever unworthy, will be accounted sacred by those to whom poetry is almost a religion. . . . He who writes about any person of a rare distinction cannot fail to feel a painful sense of doing a presumptuous thing. Imagine, then, what must be the feeling of him who sits down to write about the most adored personality among the poets of our time! Steele said beautifully of a certain lady, 'that to know her was a liberal education.' But in describing the sweet lady, and poet, and saint of whom I am asked to write Steele's eulogy would have to be amended in something after this fashion: 'To know her was an education of the heart and a purifying of the soul.' No one, I think, could spend an hour in friendly converse with Christina without feeling his moral nature braced up, so to speak,

by a spiritual tonic. And this simply arose from the fact that while she seemed to breathe a sainthood that must needs express itself in poetry, all the charm of the mere woman remained in her — remained, and coloured her life with those riches of earth, without which woman may be worshipped, but never loved as Christina Rossetti was loved by us all. . . .

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Of all contemporary poets, she had seemed to me the most indubitably inspired. I had made a lifelong study of poetic art, yet Christina's art-secret had baffled me. Her very uncertainty of touch, as regarded execution, seemed somehow to add to the impression she made upon me of inspiration. She never (as her brother William, who has gratified me by reading these pages, reminds me) 'made up her mind that she would write something, and then proceeded to write it. She always wrote just as the impulse and the form of expression came to her, and if these did not come, she wrote not at all.' But it was not her inspiration which overawed me at the idea of meeting her. It was the feeling that her inspiration was not that of the artist at all, and not that of such dramatic passion as in other poets I have been accustomed to, but the inspiration of the religious devotee. It answered a chord within me, but a chord that no poet had theretofore touched. It seemed to me to come from a power which my soul remembered in some ante-natal existence, and had not even yet wholly forgotten. . . . — Theodore Watts [-Dunton], in *The Nineteenth Century*, February, 1895.

English poetry enjoys a unique distinction in the possession of two women whose works must be ranked with all but the highest achievements of our song. It is neither misplaced sentiment nor mistaken chivalry, but the dispassionate verdict of a searching and objective criticism that claims for Elizabeth Browning and Christina Rossetti two seats in the temple of fame not far below those in which the greatest English poets of the Victorian era are enthroned. . . . Time is not so likely to wither the flower of Miss Rossetti's work ; for there is little of the temporal about its themes, which are as a rule the everlasting verities of the spirit. . . .

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Very varied are the contents of these volumes, which range from a divine simplicity to a richness that is the very ecstasy of religious utterance ; from a cloying sweetness of diction to a noble austerity ; from a picturesque and almost dramatic style to one so chastened

and so ethereal that the spirit soars with it to a higher than the earthly plane. Yet certain insistent characteristics may hardly be missed anywhere in Christina Rossetti's work: certain qualities of dreamy tenderness and ardent mysticism, a certain strain of pensive melancholy, based upon a recognition of the essential vanity of the external forms of human existence, and upon an unshaken faith in the reality of that "city of the soul" whereof poets and philosophers have in all ages dreamed. It is indeed as the poet of religious aspiration and spiritual vision that she is preëminent among English singers. Compared with her work, the best of Newman and Keble seems forced and formal; the inspiration of Herbert and Vaughan seems to flash out but fitfully when contrasted with the steady glow of hers. Such poems as 'Up-Hill,' 'Amor Mundi,' and 'Old and New Year Ditties' must be ranked among the very noblest examples of the religious lyric to be found in English literature. And although these poems, together with their many fellow-songs, were inspired by the doctrines of the Anglican communion, of which the author was ever a devoted adherent, there is nothing narrow or dogmatic about them; rather do they appeal to the general religious consciousness that is shared by all fervid and lofty souls; while their stately harmonies of thought and of emotion move in a region in which all symbols are valued but as symbols, in which theology becomes but the handmaid of religion, and in which all technical differences of belief fade in the effulgence of the vision vouchsafed to the spirit. — WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE, in *Library of the World's Best Literature.*

. . . There can be little doubt that we are now deprived of the greatest English poet of the sex which is made to inspire poetry, rather than to create it. Except Mrs. Browning, we have no one to be named with Miss Rossetti in all the roll-call of our literary history. This, to be sure, does give the advocates of feminine intellectual equality something to reflect upon. We have had, it is true, in Scotland, lady lyrists whose songs, like Lady Nairne's, and Lady Anne Lindsay's, I myself prefer to all the works of Miss Rossetti, Mrs. Browning, Miss Procter, and Mrs. Hemans. But, for the quality of conscious art, and for music and color of words in regular composition, Miss Rossetti seems to myself to have been unmatched. The faults of Mrs. Browning she did not follow, and curious it is that the more learned lady shows most of the errors which learning is supposed to counteract. Things of Miss Rossetti's will live, with things of Carew's and Suckling's. — ANDREW LANG, in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, MAY, 1895.

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DEDICATORY SONNET

Sonnets are full of love, and this my tome
Has many sonnets: so here now shall be
One sonnet more, a love sonnet, from me
To her whose heart is my heart's quiet home,
To my first Love, my Mother, on whose knee
I learnt love-lore that is not troublesome;
Whose service is my special dignity,
And she my lodestar while I go and come.
And so because you love me, and because
I love you, Mother, I have woven a wreath
Of rhymes wherewith to crown your honoured name.
In you not fourscore years can dim the flame
Of love, whose blessed glow transcends the laws
Of time and change and mortal life and death.

April 1880.

POEMS OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

LOVE AND HOPE°

Love for ever dwells in heaven, —
  Hope entereth not there.
To despairing man Love's given, —
  Hope dwells not with despair.
Love reigneth high, and reigneth low, and reigneth everywhere.

In the inmost heart Love dwelleth, —
  It may not quenchèd be;
E'en when the life-blood welleth,
  Its fond effects we see
In the name that leaves the lips the last — fades last from memory.

And when we shall awaken,
  Ascending to the sky,
Though Hope shall have forsaken,
  Sweet Love shall never die:
For perfect Love and perfect bliss shall be our lot on high.

9 October 1843.

CHARITY°

I praised the myrtle and the rose,
  At sunrise in their beauty lying:
I passed them at the short day's close,
  And both were dying.

The summer sun his rays was throwing
Brightly: yet ere I sought my rest
His last cold ray, more deeply glowing,
Died in the west.

After this bleak world's stormy weather,
All, all, save Love alone, shall die;
For Faith and Hope shall merge together
In Charity.

20 September 1844.

SERENADE

Come, wander forth with me: the orange flowers
Breathe faintest perfume from the summer bowers.
Come, wander forth with me: the moon on high
Shines proudly in a flood of brilliancy;
Around her car each burning star
Gleams like a beacon from afar.
The night wind scarce disturbs the sea
As it sighs forth so languidly,
Laden with sweetness like a bee;
And all is still, below, above,
Save murmurs of the turtle-dove
That murmurs ever of its love.
For now 'tis the hour, the balmy hour,
When the strains of love have chiefly power;
When the maid looks forth from her latticed bower,
With a gentle yielding smile,
Donning her mantle all the while.
Now the moon beams down on high
From her halo brilliantly,
By the dark clouds unencumbered
That once o'er her pale face slumbered:
Far from her mild rays flutters Folly,°

For on them floats calm Melancholy ;° —
A passionless sadness without dread,
Like the thought of those we love, long dead ;
Full of hope and chastened joy,
Heavenly, without earth's alloy.
Listen, dearest : all is quiet —
Slumbering the world's toil and riot ;
And all is fair in earth and sky and sea.
Come, wander forth with me.

4 December 1845.

TASSO AND LEONORA°

A glorious vision hovers o'er his soul,
Gilding the prison and the weary bed, —
Though hard the pillow placed beneath his head,
Though brackish be the water in the bowl
Beside him ; he can see the planets roll
In glowing adoration, without dread ;
Knowing how, by unerring wisdom led,
They struggle not against the strong control.
When suddenly a star shoots from the skies,
Than all the other stars more purely bright,
Replete with heavenly loves and harmonies.
He starts : — what meets his full awakening sight ?
Lo ! Leonora, with large humid eyes,
Gazing upon him in the misty light.

19 December 1846.

THE DEAD CITY

Once I rambled in a wood
With a careless hardihood,
Heeding not the tangled way ;
Labyrinths around me lay,
But for them I never stood.

On, still on, I wandered on,
And the sun above me shone;
  And the birds around me winging
  With their everlasting singing
Made me feel not quite alone.

In the branches of the trees
Murmured like the hum of bees
  The low sound of happy breezes,
  Whose sweet voice that never ceases
Lulls the heart to perfect ease.

Streamlets bubbled all around
On the green and fertile ground,
  Through the rushes and the grass,
  Like a sheet of liquid glass,
With a soft and trickling sound.

And I went, I went on faster,
Contemplating no disaster;
  And I plucked ripe blackberries,
  But the birds with envious eyes
Came and stole them from their master.°

For the birds here were all tame;
Some with bodies like a flame;
  Some that glanced° the branches through,
  Pure and colourless as dew;
Fearlessly to me they came.

Before me no mortal stood
In the mazes of that wood;
  Before me the birds had never
  Seen a man, but dwelt for ever
In a happy solitude:

Happy solitude, and blest
With beatitude of rest;
  Where the woods are ever vernal,
  And the life and joy eternal,
Without death's or sorrow's test.

O most blessed solitude!
O most full beatitude!
  Where are quiet without strife
  And imperishable life,
Nothing marred and all things good.

And the bright sun, life-begetting,
Never rising, never setting,
  Shining warmly overhead,
  Nor too pallid nor too red,
Lulled me to a sweet forgetting —

Sweet forgetting of the time;
And I listened for no chime
  Which might warn me to be gone;
  But I wandered on, still on,
'Neath the boughs of oak and lime.

Know I not how long I strayed
In the pleasant leafy shade;
  But the trees had gradually
  Grown more rare, the air more free,
The sun hotter overhead.

Soon the birds no more were seen
Glancing through the living green,
  And a blight had passed upon
  All the trees, and the pale sun
Shone with a strange lurid sheen.

Then a darkness spread around:
I saw nought; I heard no sound:
  Solid darkness overhead,
  With a trembling cautious tread
Passed I o'er the unseen ground.

But at length a pallid light
Broke upon my searching sight;
  A pale solitary ray
  Like a star at dawn of day
Ere the sun is hot and bright.

Towards its faintly glimmering beam
I went on as in a dream —
  A strange dream of hope and fear —
  And I saw, as I drew near,
'Twas in truth no planet's gleam;

But a lamp above a gate
Shone in solitary state,
  O'er a desert drear and cold,°
  O'er a heap of ruins old,
O'er a scene most desolate.

By that gate I entered lone°
A fair city of white stone;
  And a lovely light to see
  Dawned, and spread most gradually,
Till the air grew warm and shone.

Through the splendid streets I strayed
In that radiance without shade;
  Yet I heard no human sound;
  All was still and silent round
As a city of the dead.

All the doors were open wide;
Lattices on every side
In the wind swung to and fro —
Wind that whispered very low,
"Go and see the end of pride."

With a fixed determination
Entered I each habitation;
But they all were tenantless.
All was utter loneliness,
All was deathless desolation.

In the noiseless market-place
Was no careworn busy face;
There were none to buy or sell,
None to listen or to tell,
In this silent emptiness.

Through the city on I went
Full of awe and wonderment.
Still the light around me shone,
And I wandered on, still on,
In my great astonishment.

Till at length I reached a place
Where amid an ample space
Rose a palace for a king;
Golden was the turreting,
And of solid gold the base.

The great porch was ivory,
And the steps were ebony;
Diamond and chrysoprase
Set the pillars in a blaze,
Capitalled with jewelry.

None was there to bar my way,
And the breezes seemed to say,
"Touch not these, but pass them by,
Pressing onwards"; therefore I
Entered in and made no stay.

All around was desolate.
I went on; a silent state
Reigned in each deserted room,
And I hastened through the gloom
Till I reached an outer gate.

Soon a shady avenue,
Blossom-perfumed, met my view;
Here and there the sunbeams fell
On pure founts whose sudden swell
Up from marble basons° flew.

Every tree was fresh and green;
Not a withered leaf was seen
Through the veil of flowers and fruit;
Strong and sapful were the root,
The top boughs, and all between.

Vines were climbing everywhere
Full of purple grapes and fair;
And far off I saw the corn
With its heavy head down borne
By the odour-laden air.

Who shall strip the bending vine?
Who shall tread the press for wine?
Who shall bring the harvest in
When the pallid ears begin
In the sun to glow and shine?

On I went alone, alone,
Till I saw a tent that shone
With each bright and lustrous hue;
It was trimmed with jewels too,
And with flowers; not one was gone.

Then the breezes whispered me:
"Enter in, and look, and see
How for luxury and pride
A great multitude have died."
And I entered tremblingly.

Lo a splendid banquet laid
In a cool and pleasant shade.
Mighty tables everything
Of sweet Nature's furnishing
That was rich and rare displayed;

And each strange and luscious cate
Practised art makes delicate;
With a thousand fair devices
Full of odours and of spices;
And a warm voluptuous state.

All the vessels were of gold,
Set with gems of worth untold.
In the midst a fountain rose
Of pure milk, whose rippling flows
In a silver bason rolled.

In green emerald baskets were
Sun-red apples, streaked and fair;
Here the nectarine and peach
And ripe plum lay, and on each
The bloom rested everywhere.

Grapes were hanging overhead,
Purple, pale, and ruby-red;
  And in panniers all around
  Yellow melons shone, fresh found,
With the dew upon them spread.

And the apricot and pear
And the pulpy fig were there,
  Cherries and dark mulberries,
  Bunchy currants, strawberries,
And the lemon wan and fair:

And unnumbered others too,
Fruits of every size and hue,
  Juicy in their ripe perfection,
  Cool beneath the cool reflection
Of the curtains' skyey blue.

All the floor was strewn with flowers
Fresh from sunshine and from showers,
  Roses, lilies, jessamine;
  And the ivy ran between,
Like a thought in happy hours.°

And this feast too lacked no guest
With its warm delicious rest;
  With its couches softly sinking,
  And its glow not made for thinking,
But for careless joy at best.

Many bánqueters were there,
Wrinkled age, the young, the fair;
  In the splendid revelry
  Flushing cheek and kindling eye
Told of gladness without care.

Yet no laughter rang around,
Yet they uttered forth no sound;
With the smile upon his face
Each sat moveless in his place,
Silently, as if spellbound.

The low whispering voice was gone,
And I felt awed and alone.
In my great astonishment
To the feasters up I went —
Lo they all were turned to stone!°

Yea they all were statue-cold,
Men and women, young and old;
With the life-like look and smile
And the flush; and all the while
The hard fingers kept their hold.

Here a little child was sitting°
With a merry glance, befitting
Happy age and heedless heart;
There a young man sat apart,
With a forward look unweeting.

Nigh them was a maiden fair,
And the ringlets of her hair
Round her slender fingers twined;
And she blushed as she reclined,
Knowing that her love was there.

Here a dead man sat to sup,
In his hand a drinking-cup;
Wine-cup of the heavy gold,
Human hand stony and cold,
And no life-breath struggling up.

There a mother lay and smiled°
Down upon her infant child ;
  Happy child and happy mother,
  Laughing back to one another
With a gladness undefiled.

Here an old man slept, worn out
With the revelry and rout ;
  Here a strong man sat and gazed
  On a girl whose eyes upraised
No more wandered round about.

And none broke the stillness — none ;
I was the sole living one.
  And methought that silently
  Many seemed to look on me
With strange steadfast eyes that shone.

Full of fear I would have fled ;
Full of fear I bent my head,
  Shutting out each stony guest —
  When I looked again, the feast
And the tent had vanished.

Yes, once more I stood alone
Where the happy sunlight shone,
  And a gentle wind was sighing,
  And the little birds were flying,
And the dreariness was gone.

All these things that I have said
Awed me and made me afraid.
  What was I that I should see
  So much hidden mystery ?
And I straightway knelt and prayed.°

9 April 1847.

ELEANOR°

Cherry-red her mouth was,
Morning-blue her eye,
Lady-slim her little waist
Rounded prettily;
And her sweet smile of gladness
Made every heart rejoice:
But sweeter even than her smile
The tones were of her voice.

Sometimes she spoke, sometimes she sang;
And evermore the sound
Floated, a dreamy melody,
Upon the air around;
As though a wind were singing
Far up beside the sun,
Till sound and warmth and glory
Were blended all in one.

Her hair was long and golden,
And clustered unconfined
Over a forehead high and white
That spoke a noble mind.
Her little hand, her little foot,
Were ready evermore
To hurry forth to meet a friend;
She smiling at the door.

But if she sang or if she spoke,
'Twas music soft and grand,
As though a distant singing sea
Broke on a tuneful strand;

As though a blessed Angel
Were singing a glad song,
Halfway between the earth and heaven
Joyfully borne along.

30 July 1847.

ISIDORA

Love, whom I have loved too well,
Turn thy face away from me;
For I heed nor heaven nor hell
While mine eyes can look on thee.
Do not answer, do not speak,
For thy voice can make me weak.

I must choose 'twixt God and man,
And I dare not hesitate:
Oh how little is life's span,
And Eternity how great!
Go out from me; for I fear
Mine own strength while thou art here.

Husband, leave me; but know this:
I would gladly give my soul
So that thine might dwell in bliss
Free from the accurst control,
So that thou mightest go hence
In a hopeful penitence.

Yea from hell I would look up,
And behold thee in thy place,
Drinking of the living cup,
With the joy-look on thy face,
And the light that shines alone
From the glory of the Throne.

But how could my endless loss
  Be thine everlasting gain?
Shall thy palm grow from my cross?
  Shall thine ease be in my pain?
Yea thine own soul witnesseth
Thy life is not in my death.

It were vain that I should die —
  That we thus should perish both;
Thou wouldst gain no peace thereby;
  And in truth I should be loth
By the loss of my salvation
To increase thy condemnation.

Little infant, his and mine,
  Would that I were as thou art;
Nothing breaks that sleep of thine,
  And ah nothing breaks thy heart;
And thou knowest naught of strife,
The heart's death for the soul's life.

None misdoubt thee, none misdeem
  Of thy wishes and thy will.
All thy thoughts are what they seem,
  Very pure and very still;
And thou fearest not the voice
That once made thy heart rejoice.

Oh how calm thou art, my child!
  I could almost envy thee.
Thou hast neither wept nor smiled,
  Thou that sleepest quietly.
Would I also were at rest
With the one that I love best.

Husband, go. I dare not hearken
To thy words or look upon
Those despairing eyes that darken
Down on me — But he is gone!
Nay, come back, and be my fate
As thou wilt! — It is too late.

I have conquered; it is done,
Yea the death-struggle is o'er,
And the hopeless quiet won: —
I shall see his face no more: —
And mine eyes are waxing dim
Now they cannot look on him.

And my heart-pulses are growing
Very weak, and through my whole
Life-blood a slow chill is going: —
Blessed Saviour, take my soul
To Thy Paradise and care: —
Paradise, will he be there?

9 August 1847.

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY°

"Tell me; doth it not grieve thee to lie here
And see the cornfields waving not for thee,
Just in the waking summer of the year?"
"I fade from earth, and lo along with me
The season that I love will fade away:
How should I look for autumn longingly?"
"Yet autumn beareth fruit whilst day by day
The leaves grow browner with a mellow hue,
Declining to a beautiful decay."

"Decay is death, with which I have to do,
And see it near: behold, it is more good
Than length of days and length of sorrow too."
"But thy heart hath not dwelt in solitude;
Many have loved and love thee: dost not heed
Free love, for which in vain have others sued?"
"I thirst for love, love is mine only need,
Love such as none hath borne me nor can bear,
True love that prompteth thought and word and deed."
"Here it is not: why seek it otherwhere?
Nay, bow thy head, and own that on this earth
Are many goodly things and sweet and fair."
"There are tears in man's laughter: in his mirth°
There is a fearful forward look; and lo
An infant's cry gives token of its birth."
"I mark the ocean of Time ebb and flow:
He who hath care one day and is perplext
To-morrow may have joy in place of woe."
"Evil becomes good: and to this annext
Good becomes evil: speak of it no more:
My heart is wearied and my spirit vext."
"Is there no place it grieves thee to give o'er?
Is there no home thou lov'st, and so wouldst fain
Tarry a little longer at the door?"
"I must go hence and not return again:
But the friends whom I have shall come to me,
And dwell together with me safe from pain."
"Where is that mansion mortals cannot see?
Behold, the tombs are full of worms: shalt thou
Rise thence and soar up skywards gloriously?"
"Even as the planets shine we know not how,
We shall be raised then, changed yet still the same —
Being made like Christ, yea being as He is now."
"Thither thou go'st whence no man ever came:
Death's voyagers return not, and in death

There is no room for speech or sign or fame."
"There is room for repose that comforteth;
There weariness is not: and there content
Broodeth for ever, and hope hovereth."
"When the stars fall and when the graves are rent,
Shalt thou have safety? shalt thou look for life
When the great light of the broad sun is spent?"
"These elements shall consummate their strife,
This heaven and earth shall shrivel like a scroll,
And then be re-created, beauty-rife."
"Who shall abide it when from pole to pole
The world's foundations shall be overthrown?
Who shall abide to scan the perfect whole?"
"He who hath strength given to him, not his own:
He who hath faith in that which is not seen,
And patient hope: who trusts in Love alone."
"Yet thou — the death-struggle must intervene
Ere thou win rest: think better of it: think
Of all that is and shall be and hath been."
"The cup my Father giveth me to drink,
Shall I not take it meekly? though my heart
Tremble a moment, it shall never shrink."
"Satan will wrestle with thee when thou art
In the last agony; and Death will bring
Sins to remembrance ere thy spirit part."
"In that great hour of unknown suffering
God shall be with me, and His arm made bare
Shall fight for me: yea, underneath His wing
I shall lie safe at rest and freed from care."

20 February 1848.

SONG°

She sat and sang alway
By the green margin of a stream,
Watching the fishes leap and play
Beneath the glad sunbeam.

I sat and wept alway
Beneath the moon's most shadowy beam,
Watching the blossoms of the May
Weep leaves into the stream.

I wept for memory;
She sang for hope that is so fair:
My tears were swallowed by the sea;
Her songs died on the air.

26 November 1848.

SONG°

When I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

2 December 1848.

SYMBOLS°

I WATCHED a rosebud very long
Brought on by dew and sun and shower,
Waiting to see the perfect flower:
Then, when I thought it should be strong,
It opened at the matin hour
And fell at evensong.

I watched a nest from day to day,
A green nest full of pleasant shade,
Wherein three speckled eggs were laid:
But when they should have hatched in May,
The two old birds had grown afraid
Or tired, and flew away.

Then in my wrath I broke the bough
That I had tended so with care,
Hoping its scent should fill the air;
I crushed the eggs, not heeding how
Their ancient promise had been fair:
I would have vengeance now.

But the dead branch spoke from the sod,
And the eggs answered me again:
Because we failed dost thou complain?
Is thy wrath just? And what if God,
Who waiteth for thy fruits in vain,
Should also take the rod?

7 JANUARY 1849.

ON KEATS

A GARDEN in a garden: a green spot
Where all is green: most fitting slumber-place°
For the strong man grown weary of a race
Soon over. Unto him a goodly lot

Hath fallen in fertile ground ; there thorns are not,
But his own daisies ; silence, full of grace,
Surely hath shed a quiet on his face ;
His earth is but sweet leaves that fall and rot.
What was his record of himself, ere he
Went from us? "Here lies one whose name was writ
In water."° While the chilly shadows flit
Of sweet St. Agnes' Eve, while basil springs —
His name, in every humble heart that sings,
Shall be a fountain of love, verily.

18 JANUARY 1849 (Eve of St. Agnes).°

FOR ADVENT

SWEET sweet sound of distant waters, falling°
On a parched and thirsty plain :
Sweet sweet song of soaring skylark, calling
On the sun to shine again :
Perfume of the rose, only the fresher
For past fertilizing rain :
Pearls amid the sea, a hidden treasure
For some daring hand to gain : —
Better, dearer than all these
Is the earth beneath the trees :
Of a much more priceless worth
Is the old brown common earth.°

Little snow-white lamb, piteously bleating
For thy mother far away :
Saddest sweetest nightingale, retreating
With thy sorrow from the day :
Weary fawn whom night has overtaken,
From the herd gone quite astray :

Dove whose nest was rifled and forsaken
In the budding month of May :—
Roost upon the leafy trees,
Lie on earth and take your ease :
Death is better far than birth :°
You shall turn again to earth.

Listen to the never-pausing murmur
Of the waves that fret the shore :
See the ancient pine that stands the firmer
For the storm-shock that it bore :
And the moon her silver chalice filling
With light from the great sun's store :
And the stars which deck our temple's ceiling
As the flowers deck its floor :
Look and hearken while you may,
For these things shall pass away :
All these things shall fail and cease :
Let us wait the end in peace.

Let us wait the end in peace, for truly
That shall cease which was before :
Let us see our lamps are lighted, duly
Fed with oil nor wanting more :
Let us pray while yet the Lord will hear us,
For the time is almost o'er :
Yea, the end of all is very near us :
Yea, the Judge is at the door.
Let us pray now, while we may :
It will be too late to pray
When the quick and dead shall all
Rise at the last trumpet-call.

12 March 1849.

DREAM LAND°

WHERE sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep:
  Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
  Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
  And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
  That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest°
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
  The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain,
She cannot feel the rain
  Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
  Till time shall cease:

Sleep that no pain shall wake;
Night that no morn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.

April 1849.

THREE NUNS

I

Sospira questo core,
E non so dir perchè.

Shadow, shadow on the wall,
Spread thy shelter over me;
Wrap me with a heavy pall,
With the dark that none may see:
Fold thyself around me, come;
Shut out all the troublesome
Noise of life; I would be dumb.

Shadow, thou hast reached my feet;
Rise and cover up my head;
Be my stainless winding-sheet,
Buried before I am dead.
Lay thy cool upon my breast:
Once I thought that joy was best,
Now I only care for rest.

By the grating of my cell
Sings a solitary bird;
Sweeter than the vesper bell,
Sweetest song was ever heard.[1]
Sing upon thy living tree;
Happy echoes answer thee;
Happy songster, sing to me.

[1] "Sweetest eyes were ever seen." E. B. Browning.

When my yellow hair was curled,
  Though men saw and called me fair,
I was weary in the world
  Full of vanity and care.
Gold was left behind, curls shorn,
When I came here; that same morn
Made a bride no gems adorn.

Here wrapt in my spotless veil,
  Curtained from intruding eyes,
I whom prayers and fasts turn pale
  Wait the flush of Paradise.
But the vigil is so long
My heart sickens: — sing thy song,
Blythe bird that canst do no wrong.

Sing on, making me forget
  Present sorrow and past sin.
Sing a little longer yet:
  Soon the matins will begin;
And I must turn back again
To that aching, worse than pain, —
I must bear and not complain.

Sing; that in thy song I may
  Dream myself once more a child
In the green woods far away,
  Plucking clematis and wild
Hyacinths, till pleasure grew
Tired, yet so was pleasure too,
Resting with no work to do.

In the thickest of the wood
  I remember long ago
How a stately oaktree stood
  With a sluggish pool below

Almost shadowed out of sight
On the waters dark as night
Water-lilies lay like light.

There, while yet a child, I thought
I could live as in a dream;
Secret, neither found nor sought;
Till the lilies on the stream,
Pure as virgin purity,
Would seem scarce too pure for me:—
Ah but that can never be!

II

Sospirerà d' amore,
Ma non lo dice a me.

I loved him; yes, where was the sin?
I loved him with my heart and soul;
But I pressed forward to no goal,
There was no prize I strove to win.
Show me my sin that I may see:
Throw the first stone, thou Pharisee.

I loved him, but I never sought
That he should know that I was fair.
I prayed for him; was my sin prayer?
I sacrificed, he never bought;
He nothing gave, he nothing took;
We never bartered look for look.

My voice rose in the sacred choir,
The choir of nuns: do you condemn
Even if when kneeling among them
Faith, zeal, and love, kindled a fire,
And I prayed for his happiness
Who knew not? was my error this?

I only prayed that in the end
His trust and hope may not be vain;
I prayed not we may meet again:
I would not let our names ascend,
No not to Heaven, in the same breath;
Nor will I join the two in death.

Oh sweet is death, for I am weak
And weary, and it giveth rest.
The crucifix lies on my breast,
And all night long it seems to speak
Of rest; I hear it through my sleep,
And the great comfort makes me weep.

Oh sweet is death that bindeth up
The broken and the bleeding heart.
The draught chilled, but a cordial part
Lurked at the bottom of the cup;
And for my patience will my Lord
Give an exceeding great reward.

Yea the reward is almost won,
A crown of glory and a palm.
Soon I shall sing the unknown psalm;
Soon gaze on light, not on the sun;
And soon with surer faith shall pray
For him, and cease not night nor day.

My life is breaking like a cloud —
God judgeth not as man doth judge —
Nay, bear with me: you need not grudge
This peace; the vows that I have vowed
Have all been kept: Eternal Strength
Holds me, though mine own fails at length.

Bury me in the Convent-ground
Among the flowers that are so sweet ;
And lay a green turf at my feet,
Where thick trees cast a gloom around ;
At my head let a cross be, white
Through the long blackness of the night.

Now kneel and pray beside my bed
That I may sleep being free from pain ;
And pray that I may wake again
After His likeness who hath said
(Faithful is He who promiseth)
We shall be satisfied therewith.

III

Rispondimi, cor mio,
Perchè sospiri tu ?
Risponde: Voglio Dio,
Sospiro per Gesù.

My heart is as a freeborn bird
Caged in my cruel breast,
That flutters, flutters evermore,
Nor sings nor is at rest,
But beats against the prison bars,
As knowing its own nest
Far off beyond the clouded west.

My soul is as a hidden fount
Shut in by clammy clay
That struggles with an upward moan,
Striving to force its way
Up through the turf, over the grass,
Up up into the day
Where twilight no more turneth grey.

Oh for the grapes of the True Vine
  Growing in Paradise,
Whose tendrils join the Tree of Life
  To that which maketh wise —
Growing beside the Living Well
  Whose sweetest waters rise
Where tears are wiped from tearful eyes!

Oh for the waters of that Well
  Round which the Angels stand —
Oh for the Shadow of the Rock
  On my heart's weary land —
Oh for the Voice to guide me when
  I turn to either hand,
Guiding me till I reach heaven's strand!

Thou world from which I am come out,
  Keep all thy gems and gold;
Keep thy delights and precious things,
  Thou that art waxing old.
My heart shall beat with a new life
  When thine is dead and cold;
When thou dost fear I shall be bold.

When Earth shall pass away with all
  Her pride and pomp of sin,
The City builded without hands
  Shall safely shut me in.
All the rest is but vanity
  Which others strive to win:
Where their hopes end my joys begin.

I will not look upon a rose°
  Though it is fair to see:
The flowers planted in Paradise
  Are budding now for me:

Red roses like love visible
  Are blowing on their tree,
Or white like virgin purity.

I will not look unto the sun
  Which setteth night by night:
In the untrodden courts of heaven
  My crown shall be more bright.
Lo in the New Jerusalem
  Founded and built aright
My very feet shall tread on light.

With foolish riches of this world
  I have bought treasure where
Nought perisheth: for this white veil
  I gave my golden hair;
I gave the beauty of my face
  For vigils, fasts, and prayer;
I gave all for this cross I bear.

My heart trembled when first I took
  The vows which must be kept.
At first it was a weariness
  To watch when once I slept:
The path was rough and sharp with thorns;
  My feet bled as I stept;
The cross was heavy and I wept.

While still the names rang in mine ears
  Of daughter, sister, wife,
The outside world still looked so fair
  To my weak eyes, and rife
With beauty, my heart almost failed;
  Then in the desperate strife
I prayed, as one who prays for life, —

Until I grew to love what once
Had been so burdensome.
So now, when I am faint because
Hope deferred seems to numb
My heart, I yet can plead, and say,
Although my lips are dumb —
The Spirit and the Bride say, Come.

12 February 1849 to 10 May 1850.

IS AND WAS°

She was whiter than the ermine
That half shadowed neck and hand,
And her tresses were more golden
Than their golden band;
Snowy ostrich plumes she wore;
Yet I almost loved her more
In the simple time before.

Then she plucked the stately lilies,
Knowing not she was more fair,
And she listened to the skylark
In the morning air.
Then, a kerchief all her crown,
She looked for the acorns brown,
Bent their bough, and shook them down.

Then she thought of Christmas holly
And of Maybloom in sweet May;
Then she loved to pick the cherries
And to turn the hay.
She was humble then and meek,
And the blush upon her cheek
Told of much she could not speak.

Now she is a noble lady
With calm voice not over loud;
Very courteous in her action,
Yet you think her proud;
Much too haughty to affect;
Too indifferent to direct
Or be angry or suspect;
Doing all from self-respect.

SPRING 1850.

THE SUMMER IS ENDED°

WREATHE no more lilies in my hair,
For I am dying, Sister sweet:
Or, if you will for the last time
Indeed, why make me fair
Once for my winding-sheet.

Pluck no more roses for my breast,
For I like them fade in my prime:
Or, if you will, why pluck them still,
That they may share my rest
Once more for the last time.

Weep not for me when I am gone,
Dear tender one, but hope and smile:
Or, if you cannot choose but weep,
A little while weep on,
Only a little while.

11 SEPTEMBER 1852.

NEXT OF KIN

THE shadows gather round me, while you are in the sun:
My day is almost ended, but yours is just begun:
The winds are singing to us both and the streams are singing still,
And they fill your heart with music, but mine they cannot fill.

Your home is built in sunlight, mine in another day:
Your home is close at hand, sweet friend, but mine is far away:
Your bark is the haven where you fain would be:
I must launch out into the deep, across the unknown sea.

You, white as dove or lily or spirit of the light:
I, stained and cold and glad to hide in the cold dark night:
You, joy to many a loving heart and light to many eyes:
I, lonely in the knowledge earth is full of vanities.

Yet when your day is over, as mine is nearly done,
And when your race is finished, as mine is almost run,
You, like me, shall cross your hands and bow your graceful head:
Yea, we twain shall sleep together in an equal bed.

21 FEBRUARY 1853

A PAUSE

THEY made the chamber sweet with flowers and leaves,
And the bed sweet with flowers on which I lay;
While my soul, love-bound, loitered on its way.
I did not hear the birds about the eaves,
Nor hear the reapers talk among the sheaves:
Only my soul kept watch from day to day,
My thirsty soul kept watch for one away:—
Perhaps he loves, I thought, remembers, grieves.

At length there came the step upon the stair,
Upon the lock the old familiar hand:
Then first my spirit seemed to scent the air
Of Paradise; then first the tardy sand
Of time ran golden; and I felt my hair
Put on a glory, and my soul expand.

10 JUNE 1853.

CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD°

FLOWERS preach to us if we will hear:—
The rose saith in the dewy morn:
"I am most fair;
Yet all my loveliness is born
Upon a thorn."
The poppy saith amid the corn:
"Let but my scarlet head appear
And I am held in scorn;
Yet juice of subtle virtue lies
Within my cup of curious dyes."
The lilies say: "Behold how we
Preach without words of purity."
The violets whisper from the shade
Which their own leaves have made:
"Men scent our fragrance on the air,
Yet take no heed
Of humble lessons we would read."°

But not alone the fairest flowers:
The merest grass°
Along the roadside where we pass,
Lichen and moss and sturdy weed,
Tell of His love who sends the dew,
The rain and sunshine too,
To nourish one small seed.

21 OCTOBER 1853.

A WISH

I WISH I were a little bird
That out of sight doth soar;
I wish I were a song once heard
But often pondered o'er,
Or shadow of a lily stirred
By wind upon the floor,
Or echo of a loving word
Worth all that went before,
Or memory of a hope deferred
That springs again no more.

1853.

BALLAD°

"SOFT white lamb in the daisy meadow,
Come hither and play with me,
For I am lonesome and I am tired
Underneath the apple tree."

"There's your husband if you are lonesome, lady,
And your bed if you want for rest:
And your baby for a playfellow
With a soft hand for your breast."

"Fair white dove in the sunshine,
Perched on the ashen bough,
Come and perch by me and coo to me
While the buds are blowing now."

"I must keep my nestlings warm, lady,
Underneath my downy breast:
There's your baby to coo and crow to you
While I brood upon my nest."

"Faint white rose, come lie on my heart,
Come lie there with your thorn:
For I'll be dead at the vesper-bell
And buried the morrow morn."

"There's blood on your lily breast, lady,
Like roses when they blow,
And there's blood upon your little hand
That should be white as snow:
I will stay amid my fellows
Where the lilies grow."

"But it's oh my own own little babe
That I had you here to kiss,
And to comfort me in the strange next world
Though I slighted you so in this."

"You shall kiss both cheek and chin, mother,
And kiss me between the eyes,
Or ever the moon is on her way
And the pleasant stars arise:
You shall kiss and kiss your fill, mother,
In the nest of Paradise."

7 JANUARY 1854.

CHILD'S TALK IN APRIL

I WISH you were a pleasant wren,
And I your small accepted mate;
How we'd look down on toilsome men!
We'd rise and go to bed at eight
Or it may be not quite so late.

R735

Then you should see the nest I'd build,
The wondrous nest for you and me;
The outside rough perhaps, but filled
With wool and down; ah you should see
The cosy nest that it would be.

We'd have our change of hope and fear,
Small quarrels, reconcilements sweet:
I'd perch by you to chirp and cheer,
Or hop about on active feet,
And fetch you dainty bits to eat.

We'd be so happy by the day,
So safe and happy through the night,
We both should feel, and I should say,
It's all one season of delight,
And we'll make merry whilst we may.

Perhaps some day there'd be an egg
When spring had blossomed from the snow:
I'd stand triumphant on one leg;
Like chanticleer I'd almost crow
To let our little neighbours know.

Next you should sit and I would sing
Through lengthening days of sunny spring;
Till, if you wearied of the task,
I'd sit; and you should spread your wing
From bough to bough; I'd sit and bask.

Fancy the breaking of the shell,
The chirp, the chickens wet and bare,
The untried proud paternal swell;
And you with housewife-matron air
Enacting choicer bills of fare.

Fancy the embryo coats of down,
The gradual feathers soft and sleek;
Till clothed and strong from tail to crown,
With virgin warblings in their beak,
They too go forth to soar and seek.

So would it last an April through
And early summer fresh with dew, —
Then should we part and live as twain:
Love-time would bring me back to you,
And build our happy nest again.

8 March 1855.

COBWEBS°

It is a land with neither night nor day,
Nor heat nor cold, nor any wind nor rain,
Nor hills nor valleys: but one even plain
Stretches through long unbroken miles away,
While through the sluggish air a twilight grey
Broodeth: no moons or seasons wax and wane,
No ebb and flow are there along the main,
No bud-time, no leaf-falling, there for aye: —
No ripple on the sea, no shifting sand,
No beat of wings to stir the stagnant space:
No pulse of life through all the loveless land
And loveless sea; no trace of days before,
No guarded home, no toil-won resting-place,
No future hope, no fear for evermore.

October 1855.

MAY

I cannot tell you how it was;
But this I know: it came to pass —
Upon a bright and breezy day
When May was young, ah pleasant May!

As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn;
The last eggs had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird forgone its mate.

I cannot tell you what it was;
But this I know: it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
With all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and grey.

20 November 1855.

TO THE END

There are lilies for her sisters —
(Who so cold as they?) —
And heartsease for one I must not name
When I am far away.
I shall pluck the lady lilies
And fancy all the rest:
I shall pluck the bright-eyed heartsease
For her sake I love the best:
As I wander on with weary feet
Toward the twilight shadowy west.

O bird that flyest eastward
Unto that sunny land,
Oh wilt thou light on lilies white
Beside her whiter hand?
Soft summer wind that breathest
Of perfumes and sweet spice,
Ah tell her what I dare not tell
Of watchful waiting eyes,
Of love that yet may meet again
In distant Paradise.

I go from earth to heaven
A dim uncertain road,
A houseless pilgrim through the world
Unto a sure abode:
While evermore an Angel°
Goes with me day and night,
A ministering spirit
From the land of light,
My holy fellow-servant sent
To guide my steps aright.

I wonder if the Angels°
Love with such love as ours,
If for each other's sake they pluck
And keep eternal flowers.
Alone I am and weary,
Alone yet not alone:
Her soul talks with me by the way
From tedious stone to stone,
A blessed Angel treads with me
The awful paths unknown.

When will the long road end in rest,
The sick bird perch and brood?
When will my Guardian fold his wings
At rest in the finished good?
Lulling, lulling me off to sleep:
While Death's strong hand doth roll
My sins behind his back,
And my life up like a scroll,
Till through sleep I hear kind Angels
Rejoicing at the goal.

If her spirit went before me
Up from night to day,

It would pass me like the lightning
That kindles on its way.
I should feel it like the lightning
Flashing fresh from heaven:
I should long for heaven sevenfold more,
Yea and sevenfold seven:
Should pray as I have not prayed before,
And strive as I have not striven.

She will learn new love in heaven,
Who is so full of love;
She will learn new depths of tenderness
Who is tender like a dove.
Her heart will no more sorrow,
Her eyes will weep no more:
Yet it may be she will yearn
And look back from far before:
Lingering on the golden threshold
And leaning from the door.°

18 DECEMBER 1855.

BY THE WATER

THERE are rivers lapsing down
Lily-laden to the sea:
Every lily is a boat
For bees, one, two, or three:
I wish there were a fairy boat
For you, my friend, and me.

And if there were a fairy boat
And if the river bore us,
We should not care for all the past
Nor all that lies before us,
Not for the hopes that buoyed us once,
Not for the fears that tore us.

We would rock upon the river
  Scarcely floating by,
Rocking, rocking like the lilies,
  You, my friend, and I:
Rocking like the stately lilies
  Beneath the statelier sky.

But ah where is that river
  Whose hyacinth banks descend
Down to the sweeter lilies
  Till soft their shadows blend
Into a watery twilight?—
  And ah where is my friend?

7 February 1856.

THE LOWEST ROOM

Like flowers sequestered from the sun
  And wind of summer, day by day
I dwindled paler, whilst my hair
  Showed the first tinge of grey.

"Oh what is life, that we should live?
  Or what is death, that we must die?
A bursting bubble is our life:
  I also, what am I?"

"What is your grief? now tell me, sweet,
  That I may grieve," my sister said;
And stayed a white embroidering hand
  And raised a golden head:

Her tresses showed a richer mass,
  Her eyes looked softer than my own;
Her figure had a statelier height,
  Her voice a tenderer tone.

"Some must be second and not first;
All cannot be the first of all:
Is not this too but vanity?
I stumble like to fall.

"So yesterday I read the acts
Of Hector and each clangorous king
With wrathful great Æacides: — °
Old Homer leaves a sting."

The comely face looked up again,
The deft hand lingered on the thread.
"Sweet, tell me what is Homer's sting,
Old Homer's sting," she said.

"He stirs my sluggish pulse like wine,
He melts me like the wind of spice,°
Strong as strong Ajax' red right hand,°
And grand like Juno's eyes.

"I cannot melt the sons of men,°
I cannot fire and tempest-toss: —
Besides, those days were golden days,°
Whilst these are days of dross."

She laughed a feminine low laugh,
Yet did not stay her dexterous hand:
"Now tell me of those days," she said,
"When time ran golden sand."

"Then men were men of might and right,°
Sheer might, at least, and weighty swords:
Then men in open blood and fire
Bore witness to their words —

"Crest-rearing kings with whistling spears;
  But if these shivered in the shock
They wrenched up hundred-rooted trees,
  Or hurled the effacing rock.

"Then hand to hand, then foot to foot,
  Stern to the death-grip grappling then,
Who ever thought of gunpowder
  Amongst these men of men?

"They knew whose hand struck home the death,
  They knew who broke but would not bend,"
Could venerate an equal foe
  And scorn a laggard friend.

"Calm in the utmost stress of doom,
  Devout toward adverse powers above,
They hated with intenser hate
  And loved with fuller love.

"Then heavenly beauty could allay
  As heavenly beauty stirred the strife:
By them a slave was worshipped more
  Than is by us a wife."

She laughed again, my sister laughed;
  Made answer o'er the laboured cloth"
"I rather would be one of us
  Than wife, or slave, or both."

"Oh better then be slave or wife
  Than fritter now blank life away:
Then night had holiness of night,
  And day was sacred day.

"The princess laboured at her loom,
Mistress and handmaiden alike;
Beneath their needles grew the field
With warriors armed to strike.

"Or, look again, dim Dian's face
Gleamed perfect through the attendant night;
Were such not better than those holes
Amid that waste of white?

"A shame it is, our aimless life;
I rather from my heart would feed
From silver dish in gilded stall
With wheat and wine the steed,

"The faithful steed that bore my lord
In safety through the hostile land,
The faithful steed that arched his neck
To fondle with my hand."

Her needle erred; a moment's pause,
A moment's patience, all was well.
Then she: "But just suppose the horse,
Suppose the rider fell?

"Then captive in an alien house,°
Hungering on exile's bitter bread, —
They happy, they who won the lot
Of sacrifice," she said.

Speaking she faltered, while her look
Showed forth her passion like a glass;
With hand suspended, kindling eye,
Flushed cheek, how fair she was!

"Ah well, be those the days of dross;
  This, if you will, the age of gold:
Yet had those days a spark of warmth,
  While these are somewhat cold —

"Are somewhat mean and cold and slow,
  Are stunted from heroic growth:
We gain but little when we prove
  The worthlessness of both."

"But life is in our hands," she said:
  "In our own hands for gain or loss:
Shall not the Sevenfold Sacred Fire
  Suffice to purge our dross?

"Too short a century of dreams,
  One day of work sufficient length;
Why should not you, why should not I,
  Attain heroic strength?

"Our life is given us as a blank;
  Ourselves must make it blest or curst:
Who dooms me I shall only be
  The second, not the first?

"Learn from old Homer, if you will,
  Such wisdom as his books have said:
In one the acts of Ajax shine,
  In one of Diomed.

"Honoured all heroes whose high deeds
  Through life, through death, enlarge their span;
Only Achilles in his rage
  And sloth is less than man."

"Achilles only less than man?
He less than man who, half a god,
Discomfited all Greece with rest,
Cowed Ilion with a nod?

"He offered vengeance, lifelong grief
To one dear ghost, uncounted price:
Beasts, Trojans, adverse gods, himself,
Heaped up the sacrifice.

"Self-immolated to his friend,
Shrined in world's wonder, Homer's page,
Is this the man, the less than men
Of this degenerate age?"

"Gross from his acorns, tusky boar
Does memorable acts like his;
So for her snared offended young
Bleeds the swart lioness."

But here she paused; our eyes had met,
And I was whitening with the jeer;
She rose; "I went too far," she said;
Spoke low; "Forgive me, dear.

"To me our days seem pleasant days,
Our home a haven of pure content;
Forgive me if I said too much,
So much more than I meant.

"Homer, though greater than his gods,°
With rough-hewn virtues was sufficed
And rough-hewn men: but what are such
To us who learn of Christ?"

The much-moved pathos of her voice,
Her almost tearful eyes, her cheek
Grown pale, confessed the strength of love
Which only made her speak:

For mild she was, of few soft words,
Most gentle, easy to be led,
Content to listen when I spoke
And reverence what I said;

I elder sister by six years;
Not half so glad, or wise, or good:
Her words rebuked my secret self
And shamed me where I stood.

She never guessed her words reproved
A silent envy nursed within,
A selfish, souring discontent,
Pride-born, the devil's sin.

I smiled, half bitter, half in jest:
"The wisest man of all the wise
Left for his summary of life
'Vanity of vanities.'

"Beneath the sun there's nothing new:
Men flow, men ebb, mankind flows on:
If I am wearied of my life,
Why so was Solomon.

"Vanity of vanities he preached
Of all he found, of all he sought:
Vanities of vanities, the gist
Of all the words he taught.

"This in the wisdom of the world,
In Homer's page, in all, we find:
As the sea is not filled, so yearns
Man's universal mind.

"This Homer felt, who gave his men
With glory but a transient state:
His very Jove could not reverse
Irrevocable fate.

"Uncertain all their lot save this —
Who wins must lose, who lives must die:
All trodden out into the dark
Alike, all vanity."

She scarcely answered when I paused
But rather to herself said: "One
Is here," low-voiced and loving, "yea,
Greater than Solomon."

So both were silent, she and I:
She laid her work aside, and went
Into the garden-walks, like Spring,
All gracious with content;

A little graver than her wont,
Because her words had fretted me;
Not warbling quite her merriest tune
Bird-like from tree to tree.

I chose a book to read and dream:
Yet half the while with furtive eyes
Marked how she made her choice of flowers
Intuitively wise,

And ranged them with instinctive taste
  Which all my books had failed to teach;
Fresh rose herself, and daintier
  Than blossom of the peach.

By birthright higher than myself,
  Though nestling of the self-same nest:
No fault of hers, no fault of mine,
  But stubborn to digest.

I watched her, till my book unmarked
  Slid noiseless to the velvet floor;
Till all the opulent summer-world
  Looked poorer than before.

Just then her busy fingers ceased,
  Her fluttered colour went and came:
I knew whose step was on the walk,
  Whose voice would name her name.

* * * * *

Well, twenty years have passed since then:
  My sister now, a stately wife
Still fair, looks back in peace and sees
  The longer half of life —

The longer half of prosperous life,
  With little grief, or fear, or fret:
She, loved and loving long ago,
  Is loved and loving yet.

A husband honourable, brave,
  Is her main wealth in all the world:
And next to him one like herself,
  One daughter golden-curled;

Fair image of her own fair youth,
As beautiful and as serene,
With almost such another love
As her own love has been.

Yet, though of world-wide charity,
And in her home most tender dove,
Her treasure and her heart are stored
In the home-land of love:

She thrives, God's blessed husbandry;°
Most like a vine which full of fruit
Doth cling and lean and climb toward heaven
While earth still binds its root.

I sit and watch my sister's face:
How little altered since the hours
When she, a kind light-hearted girl,
Gathered her garden flowers,

Her song just mellowed by regret
For having teased me with her talk;
Then all-forgetful as she heard
One step upon the walk.

While I? I sat alone and watched;
My lot in life, to live alone
In mine own world of interests,
Much felt but little shown.

Not to be first: how hard to learn
That lifelong lesson of the past;
Line graven on line and stroke on stroke,
But, thank God, learned at last.

So now in patience I possess
My soul year after tedious year,
Content to take the lowest place,°
The place assigned me here.

Yet sometimes, when I feel my strength
Most weak, and life most burdensome,
I lift mine eyes up to the hills
From whence my help shall come:

Yea, sometimes still I lift my heart
To the Archangelic trumpet-burst,
When all deep secrets shall be shown,
And many last be first.

30 SEPTEMBER 1856.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

For my Godchildren

THE Shepherds had an Angel,
The Wise Men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together
And singing angels are?—

Lord Jesus is my Guardian,
So I can nothing lack:
The lambs lie in His bosom
Along life's dangerous track:
The wilful lambs that go astray
He bleeding fetches back.

Lord Jesus is my guiding star,
My beacon-light in heaven :
He leads me step by step along
The path of life uneven :
He, true light, leads me to that land
Whose day shall be as seven.

Those Shepherds through the lonely night
Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host
Who neither tire nor sleep,
All singing " Glory glory "
In festival they keep.

Christ watches me, His little lamb,
Cares for me day and night,
That I may be His own in heaven :
So angels clad in white
Shall sing their " Glory glory "
For my sake in the height.

The Wise Men left their country
To journey morn by morn,
With gold and frankincense and myrrh,
Because the Lord was born :
God sent a star to guide them
And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
Their star is like God's book ;
I must be like those good Wise Men
With heavenward heart and look :
But shall I give no gifts to God ? —
What precious gifts they took !

Lord, I will give my love to Thee,
Than gold much costlier,
Sweeter to Thee than frankincense,
More prized than choicest myrrh:
Lord, make me dearer day by day,
Day by day holier;

Nearer and dearer day by day:
Till I my voice unite,
And sing my "Glory glory"
With angels clad in white;
All "Glory glory" given to Thee
Through all the heavenly height.

6 October 1856.

A TRIAD°

Three sang of love together: one with lips
Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,
Flushed to the yellow hair and finger-tips;
And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow
Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show;
And one was blue with famine after love,
Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low
The burden of what those were singing of.
One shamed herself in love; one temperately
Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;
One famished died for love. Thus two of three
Took death for love and won him after strife;
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:
All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

18 December 1856.

LOVE FROM THE NORTH°

I HAD a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
Were flushed with sun and flowers that day;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts:
"It's quite too late to think of nay."—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
Myself had almost answered "yea:"
When through the flashing nave I heard
A struggle and resounding "nay."

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in fear,
But I stood high who stood at bay:
"And if I answer yea, fair Sir,
What man art thou to bar with nay?"

He was a strong man from the north,
Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous grey:
"Put yea by for another time
In which I will not say thee nay."

He took me in his strong white arms,
He bore me on his horse away
O'er crag, morass, and hairbreadth pass,
But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,°
With links of love he makes me stay ;
Till now I've neither heart nor power
Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

19 DECEMBER 1856.

IN THE ROUND TOWER AT JHANSI°

8 JUNE 1857

A HUNDRED, a thousand to one ; even so ;
Not a hope in the world remained :
The swarming howling wretches below
Gained and gained and gained.

Skene looked at his pale young wife.
"Is the time come?" — "The time is come."
Young, strong, and so full of life,
The agony struck them dumb.

Close his arm about her now,
Close her cheek to his,
Close the pistol to her brow —
God forgive them this!

"Will it hurt much?" — "No, mine own :
I wish I could bear the pang for both." —
"I wish I could bear the pang alone :
Courage, dear, I am not loth."

Kiss and kiss : "It is not pain
Thus to kiss and die.
One kiss more." — "And yet one again." —
"Good-bye." — "Good-bye."

SEPTEMBER 1857.

A BETTER RESURRECTION°

I HAVE no wit, no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears.
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf;
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk:
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see;
Yet rise it shall — the sap of Spring;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold;
Cast in the fire the perished thing;
Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him, my King:
O Jesus, drink of me.

30 JUNE 1857.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS

WHEN all the over-work of life
Is finished once, and fast asleep
We swerve no more beneath the knife
But taste that silence cool and deep;

Forgetful of the highways rough,
Forgetful of the thorny scourge,
Forgetful of the tossing surge,
Then shall we find it is enough?

How can we say "enough" on earth —
"Enough" with such a craving heart?
I have not found it since my birth,
But still have bartered part for part.
I have not held and hugged the whole,
But paid the old to gain the new:
Much have I paid, yet much is due,
Till I am beggared sense and soul.

I used to labour, used to strive
For pleasure with a restless will:
Now if I save my soul alive
All else what matters, good or ill?
I used to dream alone, to plan
Unspoken hopes and days to come: —
Of all my past this is the sum —
I will not lean on child of man.

To give, to give, not to receive!
I long to pour myself, my soul,
Not to keep back or count or leave,
But king with king to give the whole.
I long for one to stir my deep —
I have had enough of help and gift —
I long for one to search and sift
Myself, to take myself and keep.

You scratch my surface with your pin,
You stroke me smooth with hushing breath: —
Nay pierce, nay probe, nay dig within,
Probe my quick core and sound my depth.

You call me with a puny call,
  You talk, you smile, you nothing do:
  How should I spend my heart on you,
My heart that so outweighs you all?

Your vessels are by much too strait:
  Were I to pour, you could not hold. —
Bear with me: I must bear to wait,
  A fountain sealed through heat and cold.
Bear with me days or months or years:
  Deep must call deep until the end
  When friend shall no more envy friend
Nor vex his friend at unawares.

Not in this world of hope deferred,
  This world of perishable stuff: —
Eye hath not seen nor ear hath heard
  Nor heart conceived° that full "enough":
Here moans the separating sea,
  Here harvests fail, here breaks the heart:
  There God shall join and no man part,
I full of Christ and Christ of me.

27 August 1857.

MEMORY°

I

I nursed it in my bosom while it lived,
  I hid it in my heart when it was dead.
In joy I sat alone; even so I grieved
  Alone, and nothing said.

I shut the door to face the naked truth,
  I stood alone — I faced the truth alone,
Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth
  Till first and last were shown.

I took the perfect balances and weighed;
No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise;
Weighed, found it wanting: not a word I said,
But silent made my choice.

None know the choice I made; I make it still.
None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
Breaking mine idol: I have braced my will
Once, chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, I laid it cold,
Crushed in my deep heart where it used to live.
My heart dies inch by inch; the time grows old,
Grows old in which I grieve.

8 November 1857.

II

I have a room whereinto no one enters
Save I myself alone:
There sits a blessed memory on a throne,
There my life centres;

While winter comes and goes — oh tedious comer! —
And while its nip-wind blows;
While bloom the bloodless lily and warm rose
Of lavish summer.

If any should force entrance he might see there
One buried yet not dead,
Before whose face I no more bow my head
Or bend my knee there;

But often in my worn life's autumn weather
I watch there with clear eyes,
And think how it will be in Paradise
When we're together.

17 February 1865.

A BIRTHDAY°

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;°
Hang it with vair° and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

18 NOVEMBER 1857.

AN APPLE GATHERING°

I PLUCKED pink blossoms from mine apple-tree
And wore them all that evening in my hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
As I had come I went the self-same track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Lilias smiled in trudging by,
Their heaped-up basket teazed me like a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
A voice talked with her through the shadows cool
More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
Laughing and listening in this very lane;
To think that by this way we used to walk
We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,
And hastened: but I loitered; while the dews
Fell fast I loitered still.

23 November 1857.

WINTER: MY SECRET

I tell my secret? No indeed, not I:
Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not to-day; it froze, and blows, and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none :
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
To-day's a nipping day, a biting day ;
In which one wants a shawl,
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps :
I cannot ope to every one who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling through my hall ;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me,
Nipping and clipping through my wraps and all.
I wear my mask for warmth : who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows ?
You would not peck ? I thank you for good will,
Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time : yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither through the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,
When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

23 November 1857.

MAUDE CLARE°

Out of the church she followed them
With a lofty step and mien:
His bride was like a village maid,
Maude Clare was like a queen.

"Son Thomas," his lady mother said,
With smiles, almost with tears:
"May Nell and you but live as true
As we have done for years;

"Your father thirty years ago
Had just your tale to tell;
But he was not so pale as you,
Nor I so pale as Nell."

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
Or ever he kissed the bride.

"Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
Have brought my gift," she said:
"To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
To bless the marriage-bed.

"Here's my half of the golden chain
You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
For lilies in the beck.°

"Here's my half of the faded leaves
We plucked from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves,—
The lilies are budding now."

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,
  He faltered in his place:
"Lady," he said, — "Maude Clare," he said, —
  "Maude Clare": — and hid his face.

She turned to Nell: "My Lady Nell,
  I have a gift for you;
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were gone,
  Or, were it flowers, the dew.

"Take my share of a fickle heart,
  Mine of a paltry love:
Take it or leave it as you will,
  I wash my hands thereof."

"And what you leave," said Nell, "I'll take,
  And what you spurn I'll wear;
For he's my lord for better and worse,
  And him I love, Maude Clare.

"Yea though you're taller by the head,
  More wise, and much more fair,
I'll love him till he loves me best —
  Me best of all, Maude Clare."

Towards February 1858.

ADVENT

This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
  These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year
  And still their flame is strong.
"Watchman, what of the night?" we cry,
  Heart-sick with hope deferred:
"No speaking signs are in the sky,"
  Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
"Watchman, what of the night?" But still
His answer sounds the same:
"No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame."

One to another hear them speak
The patient virgins wise:
"Surely He is not far to seek"—
"All night we watch and rise."
"The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him."

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
"Friends watch us who have touched the goal."
"They urge us, come up higher."
"With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ." — "They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb."

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
  We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
  And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast Who wept
  For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
  He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
  We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
  And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
  Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, "Arise, My love,
  My fair one, come away."

2 May 1858.

UP–HILL°

Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
  Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
  From morn to night, my friend.

But is there for the night a resting-place?
  A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.
May not the darkness hide it from my face?
  You cannot miss that inn.

Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?
  Those who have gone before.
Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?
  They will not keep you standing at that door.

Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?
Of labour you shall find the sum.
Will there be beds for me and all who seek?
Yea, beds for all who come.

29 JUNE 1858.

AT HOME°

WHEN I was dead, my spirit turned
To seek the much-frequented house.
I passed the door, and saw my friends
Feasting beneath green orange-boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.
Said one: "To-morrow we shall be
Plod plod along the featureless sands,
And coasting miles and miles of sea."
Said one: "Before the turn of tide
We will achieve the eyrie-seat."
Said one: "To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet."

"To-morrow," said they, strong with hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
"To-morrow," cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon;
I, only I, had passed away:
"To-morrow and to-day," they cried;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth ;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth :
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

29 JUNE 1858.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW°

I

ALL the world is out in leaf,
Half the world in flower,
Earth has waited weeks and weeks
For this special hour :
Faint the rainbow comes and goes
On a sunny shower.

All the world is making love :
Bird to bird in bushes,
Beast to beast in glades, and frog
To frog among the rushes :
Wake, O south wind sweet with spice,
Wake the rose to blushes.

Life breaks forth to right and left —
Pipe wild-wood notes cheery.
Nevertheless there are the dead
Fast asleep and weary —
To-day we live, to-day we love,
Wake and listen, deary.

II

I wish I were dead, my foe,
My friend, I wish I were dead,
With a stone at my tired feet
And a stone at my tired head.

In the pleasant April days
Half the world will stir and sing,
But half the world will slug and rot
For all the sap of Spring.

29 JUNE 1858.

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD°

THERE'S blood between us, love, my love,
There's father's blood, there's brother's blood;
And blood's a bar I cannot pass.
I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden sky-ward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.
My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
Of love that shall not yet avail;
Alas, my heart, if I could bare
My heart, this selfsame stain is there:
I seek the sea of glass and fire°
To wash the spot, to burn the snare;
Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher:
Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.
I see the far-off city grand,

Beyond the hills a watered land,
Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand
Of mansions where the righteous sup;
Who sleep at ease among their trees,
Or wake to sing a cadenced hymn
With Cherubim and Seraphim.
They bore the Cross, they drained the cup,
Racked, roasted, crushed, wrenched limb from limb,
They the offscouring of the world:
The heaven of starry heavens unfurled,
The sun before their face is dim.

You looking earthward, what see you?
Milk-white, wine-flushed among the vines,°
Up and down leaping, to and fro,
Most glad, most full, made strong with wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

You linger, yet the time is short:
Flee for your life, gird up your strength
To flee; the shadows stretched at length
Show that day wanes, that night draws nigh;
Flee to the mountain, tarry not.
Is this a time for smile and sigh,
For songs among the secret trees
Where sudden bluebirds nest and sport?
The time is short and yet you stay:
To-day, while it is called to-day,
Kneel, wrestle, knock, do violence, pray;
To-day is short, to-morrow nigh:
Why will you die? why will you die?

You sinned with me a pleasant sin :
Repent with me, for I repent.
Woe's me the lore I must unlearn !
Woe's me that easy way we went,
So rugged when I would return !
How long until my sleep begin,
How long shall stretch these nights and days ?
Surely, clean Angels cry, she prays ;
She laves her soul with tedious tears :
How long must stretch these years and years ?

I turn from you my cheeks and eyes,
My hair which you shall see no more —
Alas for joy that went before,
For joy that dies, for love that dies !
Only my lips shall turn to you,
My livid lips that cry, Repent !
O weary life, O weary Lent,
O weary time whose stars are few !
How should I rest in Paradise,
Or sit on steps of heaven alone ?
If Saints and Angels spoke of love,
Should I not answer from my throne,
Have pity upon me, ye my friends,
For I have heard the sound thereof.
Should I not turn with yearning eyes,
Turn earthwards with a pitiful pang ?
Oh save me from a pang in heaven !
By all the gifts we took and gave,
Repent, repent, and be forgiven.
This life is long, but yet it ends ;
Repent and purge your soul and save :
No gladder song the morning stars°
Upon their birthday morning sang
Than Angels sing when one repents.

I tell you what I dreamed last night.
A spirit with transfigured face
Fire-footed clomb° an infinite space.
I heard his hundred pinions clang,
Heaven-bells rejoicing rang and rang,
Heaven-air was thrilled with subtle scents,
Worlds spun upon their rushing cars:
He mounted shrieking "Give me light!"
Still light was poured on him, more light;
Angels, Archangels he outstripped,
Exultant in exceeding might,
And trod the skirts of Cherubim.
Still "Give me light," he shrieked; and dipped
His thirsty face, and drank a sea,
Athirst with thirst it could not slake.
I saw him, drunk with knowledge, take
From aching brows the aureole crown —
His locks writhe like a cloven snake —
He left his throne to grovel down
And lick the dust of Seraphs' feet:
For what is knowledge duly weighed?°
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea all the progress he had made
Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

I tell you what I dreamed last night.
It was not dark, it was not light,
Cold dews had drenched my plenteous hair
Through clay; you came to seek me there,
And "Do you dream of me?" you said.
My heart was dust that used to leap
To you; I answered half asleep:
"My pillow is damp, my sheets are red,
There's a leaden tester to my bed:

Find you a warmer playfellow,
A warmer pillow for your head,
A kinder love to love than mine."
You wrung your hands: while I, like lead,
Crushed downwards through the sodden earth:
You smote your hands but not in mirth,
And reeled but were not drunk with wine.

For all night long I dreamed of you:
I woke and prayed against my will,
Then slept to dream of you again.
At length I rose and knelt and prayed.
I cannot write the words I said,
My words were slow, my tears were few;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder. When this morning broke,
My face was pinched, my hair was grey,
And frozen blood was on the sill
Where stifling in my struggle I lay.

If now you saw me you would say:
Where is the face I used to love?
And I would answer: Gone before;
It tarries veiled in Paradise.
When once the morning star shall rise,
When earth with shadow flees away
And we stand safe within the door,
Then you shall lift the veil thereof.
Look up, rise up: for far above
Our palms are grown, our place is set;
There we shall meet as once we met,
And love with old familiar love.

9 July 1858.

YET A LITTLE WHILE

THESE days are long before I die :
  To sit alone upon a thorn
  Is what the nightingale forlorn
Does night by night continually :
She swells her heart to ecstasy°
Until it bursts and she can die.°

These days are long that wane and wax :
  Waxeth and wanes the ghostly moon,
  Achill and pale in cordial June :
What is it that she wandering lacks ?
She seems as one that aches and aches,
Most sick to wane, most sick to wax.

Of all the sad sights in the world
  The downfall of an Autumn leaf
  Is grievous and suggesteth grief :
Who thought when Spring was fresh unfurled
Of this ? when Spring-twigs gleamed impearled
Who thought of frost that nips the world ?

There are a hundred subtle stings
  To prick us in our daily walk :
  A young fruit cankered on its stalk,
A strong bird snared for all his wings,
A nest that sang but never sings :
Yea sight and sound and silence stings.°

There is a lack in solitude,
  There is a load in throng of life :
  One with another genders strife,
To be alone yet is not good :
I know but of one neighbourhood
At peace and full — death's solitude.

Sleep soundly, dears, who lulled at last
  Forget the bird and all her pains,
  Forget the moon that waxes, wanes,
The leaf, the sting, the frostful blast:
Forget the troublous years that, past
In strife or ache, did end at last.

We have clear call of daily bells,
  A dimness where the anthems are,
  A chancel vault of sky and star,
A thunder if the organ swells:
Alas our daily life — what else? —
Is not in tune with daily bells.

You have deep pause betwixt the chimes
  Of earth and heaven, a patient pause
  Yet glad with rest by certain laws:
You look and long: while oftentimes
Precursive flush of morning climbs,
And air vibrates with coming chimes.

6 August 1858.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME°

The first was like a dream through summer heat,
  The second like a tedious numbing swoon
While the half-frozen pulses lagged to beat
  Beneath a winter moon.

"But," says my friend, "what was this thing and where?"
  It was a pleasure-place within my soul;
An earthly paradise supremely fair
  That lured me from the goal.

The first part was a tissue of hugged lies;
The second was its ruin fraught with pain:
Why raise the fair delusion to the skies
But to be dashed again?

My castle stood of white transparent glass
Glittering and frail with many a fretted spire,
But when the summer sunset came to pass
It kindled into fire.

My pleasaunce° was an undulating green,
Stately with trees whose shadows slept below,
With glimpses of smooth garden-beds between
Like flame or sky or snow.

Swift squirrels on the pastures took their ease,
With leaping lambs safe from the unfeared knife;
All singing-birds rejoicing in those trees
Fulfilled their careless life.

Woodpigeons cooed there, stock-doves nestled there;
My trees were full of songs and flowers and fruit;
Their branches spread a city to the air
And mice lodged in their root.

My heath lay farther off, where lizards lived
In strange metallic mail, just spied and gone;
Like darted lightnings here and there perceived
But nowhere dwelt upon.

Frogs and fat toads were there to hop or plod
And propagate in peace, an uncouth crew,
Where velvet-headed rushes rustling nod
And spill the morning dew.

All caterpillars throve beneath my rule,
With snails and slugs in corners out of sight;
I never marred the curious sudden stool
That perfects in a night.

Safe in his excavated gallery
The burrowing mole groped on from year to year;
No harmless hedgehog curled because of me
His prickly back for fear.

Oft-times one like an angel walked with me,
With spirit-discerning eyes like flames of fire
But deep as the unfathomed endless sea,
Fulfilling my desire:

And sometimes like a snowdrift he was fair,
And sometimes like a sunset glorious red,
And sometimes he had wings to scale the air
With aureole round his head.

We sang our songs together by the way,
Calls and recalls and echoes of delight;
So communed we together all the day,
And so in dreams by night.

I have no words to tell what way we walked,
What unforgotten path now closed and sealed:
I have no words to tell all things we talked,
All things that he revealed:

This only can I tell: that hour by hour
I waxed more feastful, lifted up and glad;
I felt no thorn-prick when I plucked a flower,
Felt not my friend was sad.

"To-morrow," once I said to him with smiles.
"To-night," he answered gravely; and was dumb,
But pointed out the stones that numbered miles
And miles and miles to come.

"Not so," I said: "to-morrow shall be sweet:
To-night is not so sweet as coming days."
Then first I saw that he had turned his feet,
Had turned from me his face:

Running and flying miles and miles he went,
But once looked back to beckon with his hand,
And cry: "Come home, O love, from banishment:
Come to the distant land."

That night destroyed me like an avalanche;°
One night turned all my summer back to snow:
Next morning not a bird upon my branch,
Not a lamb woke below, —

No bird, no lamb, no living breathing thing;
No squirrel scampered on my breezy lawn,
No mouse lodged by his hoard: all joys took wing
And fled before that dawn.

Azure and sun were starved from heaven above,
No dew had fallen, but biting frost lay hoar:
O love, I knew that I should meet my love,
Should find my love no more.

"My love no more," I muttered, stunned with pain:
I shed no tear, I wrung no passionate hand,
Till something whispered: "You shall meet again,
Meet in a distant land."

Then with a cry like famine I arose,
I lit my candle, searched from room to room,
Searched up and down; a war of winds that froze
Swept through the blank of gloom.

I searched day after day, night after night;
Scant change there came to me of night or day:
"No more," I wailed, "no more:" and trimmed my light,
And gnashed but did not pray,

Until my heart broke and my spirit broke:
Upon the frost-bound floor I stumbled, fell,
And moaned: "It is enough: withhold the stroke.
Farewell, O love, farewell."

Then life swooned from me. And I heard the song
Of spheres and spirits° rejoicing over me:
One cried: "Our sister, she hath suffered long."—
One answered: "Make her see."

One cried: "Oh blessèd she who no more pain,
Who no more disappointment shall receive."—
One answered: "Not so: she must live again;
Strengthen thou her to live."

So while I lay entranced a curtain seemed
To shrivel with crackling from before my face:
Across mine eyes a waxing radiance beamed
And showed a certain place.

I saw a vision of a woman, where
Night and new morning strive for domination;
Incomparably pale, and almost fair,
And sad beyond expression.

Her eyes were like some fire-enshrining gem,
Were stately like the stars, and yet were tender;
Her figure charmed me like a windy stem
Quivering and drooped and slender.

I stood upon the outer barren ground,
She stood on inner ground that budded flowers;
While circling in their never-slackening round
Danced by the mystic hours.°

But every flower was lifted on a thorn,
And every thorn shot upright from its sands
To gall her feet; hoarse laughter pealed in scorn
With cruel clapping hands.

She bled and wept, yet did not shrink; her strength
Was strung up until daybreak of delight:
She measured measureless sorrow toward its length,
And breadth, and depth, and height.

Then marked I how a chain sustained her form,
A chain of living links not made nor riven:
It stretched sheer up through lightning, wind, and storm,
And anchored fast in heaven.

One cried: "How long? yet founded on the Rock
She shall do battle, suffer, and attain." —
One answered: "Faith quakes in the tempest shock —
Strengthen her soul again."

I saw a cup sent down and come to her
Brimfull of loathing and of bitterness:
She drank with livid lips that seemed to stir
The depth, not make it less.

But as she drank I spied a hand distil
  New wine and virgin honey ; making it
First bitter-sweet, then sweet indeed, until
  She tasted only sweet.

Her lips and cheeks waxed rosy-fresh and young ;
  Drinking she sang "My soul shall nothing want ;"
And drank anew : while soft a song was sung,
  A mystical slow chant.

One cried : "The wounds are faithful of a friend :
  The wilderness shall blossom as a rose." —
One answered : "Rend the veil, declare the end,
  Strengthen her ere she goes."

Then earth and heaven were rolled up like a scroll ;
  Time and space, change and death, had passed away ;
Weight, number, measure, each had reached its whole :
  The day had come, that day.

Multitudes — multitudes — stood up in bliss,
  Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair ;
With harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace,
  And crowned and haloed hair.

They sang a song, a new song in the height,
  Harping with harps to Him who is strong and true :
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new light,
  Lo all things were made new.

Tier beyond tier they rose and rose and rose,
  So high that it was dreadful, flames with flames :
No man could number them, no tongue disclose
  Their secret sacred names.

As though one pulse stirred all, one rush of blood
Fed all, one breath swept through them myriad-voiced,
They struck their harps, cast down their crowns, they stood
And worshipped and rejoiced.

Each face looked one way like a moon new-lit,
Each face looked one way towards its Sun of Love;
Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored it
And knew no end thereof.

Glory touched glory on each blessèd head,
Hands locked dear hands never to sunder more:
These were the new-begotten from the dead
Whom the great birthday bore.

Heart answered heart, soul answered soul at rest,
Double against each other, filled, sufficed:
All loving, loved of all; but loving best
And best beloved of Christ.

I saw that one who lost her love in pain,
Who trod on thorns, who drank the loathsome cup;
The lost in night, in day was found again;
The fallen was lifted up.

They stood together in the blessèd noon,
They sang together through the length of days;
Each loving face bent Sunwards like a moon
New-lit with love and praise.

Therefore, O friend, I would not if I might
Rebuild my house of lies, wherein I joyed
One time to dwell: my soul shall walk in white,
Cast down but not destroyed.

Therefore in patience I possess my soul;
  Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face,
To pluck down, to build up again the whole —
  But in a distant place.

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them;
  This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet:
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,
  My heart remembers it.

I lift the hanging hands, the feeble knees —
  I, precious more than seven times molten gold —
Until the day when from His storehouses
  God shall bring new and old;

Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief,
  Garment of praise for spirit of heaviness:°
Although to-day I fade as doth a leaf,
  I languish and grow less.

Although to-day He prunes my twigs with pain,
  Yet doth His blood nourish and warm my root:
To-morrow I shall put forth buds again
  And clothe myself with fruit.

Although to-day I walk in tedious ways,
  To-day His staff is turned into a rod,
Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days
  And stay upon my God.

19 November 1858.

L. E. L.

"Whose heart was breaking for a little love."

Downstairs I laugh, I sport and jest with all;
But in my solitary room above
I turn my face in silence to the wall;
My heart is breaking for a little love.
Though winter frosts are done,
And birds pair every one,
And leaves peep out, for springtide is begun.

I feel no spring, while spring is well-nigh blown,
I find no nest, while nests are in the grove:
Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone,
My heart that breaketh for a little love.
While golden in the sun
Rivulets rise and run,
While lilies bud, for springtide is begun.

All love, are loved, save only I;° their hearts
Beat warm with love and joy, beat full thereof:
They cannot guess, who play the pleasant parts,
My heart is breaking for a little love.
While bee-hives wake and whirr,
And rabbit thins his fur,
In living spring that sets the world astir.

I deck myself with silks and jewelry,
I plume myself like any mated dove:
They praise my rustling show, and never see
My heart is breaking for a little love.
While sprouts green lavender
With rosemary and myrrh,
For in quick spring the sap is all astir.

Perhaps some saints in glory guess the truth,
Perhaps some angels read it as they move,
And cry one to another full of ruth,
"Her heart is breaking for a little love."
Though other things have birth,
And leap and sing for mirth,
When springtime wakes and clothes and feeds the earth.

Yet saith a saint, "Take patience for thy scathe";
Yet saith an angel: "Wait, and thou shalt prove
True best is last, true life is born of death,
O thou, heart-broken for a little love.
Then love shall fill thy girth,
And love make fat thy dearth,
When new spring builds new heaven and clean new earth."

15 February 1859.

GOBLIN MARKET°

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry:°
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—

Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly;
Come buy, come buy:
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,°
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try:
Currants and gooseberries,
Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy."
Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
"Lie close," Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
"We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?"
"Come buy," call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
"Oh," cried Lizzie, "Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men."
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;

Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
"Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds' weight.
How fair the vine must grow
Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes."
"No," said Lizzie: "No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us."
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled liked a snail,
One like a wombat° prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel° tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch

When its last restraint is gone.
Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and troopedthe goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
"Come buy, come buy."
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,
Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
"Come buy, come buy," was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money.
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried "Pretty Goblin" still for "Pretty Polly";
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
"Good Folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,

And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather."
"You have much gold upon your head,"
They answered all together:
"Buy from us with a golden curl."
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,
Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red.
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
"Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight

She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.
You should not loiter so."
"Nay, hush," said Laura:
"Nay, hush, my sister:
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still:
To-morrow night I will
Buy more;" and kissed her.
"Have done with sorrow;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed:
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap."

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed:

Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forebore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro
Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep.
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,

Then turning homeward said: "The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep."
But Laura loitered still among the rushes,
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
"Come buy, come buy,"
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling —
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, "O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glow-worm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?"

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
"Come buy our fruits, come buy."
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous° pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:
She said not one word in her heart's sore ache:
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry,
"Come buy, come buy;" —
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none.

It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook:
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care,
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry:
"Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy:" —
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door.
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze
At twilight, halted by the brook:
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping:
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes, —
Hugged her and kissed her:
Squeezed and caressed her:
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates:
"Look at our apples
Russet and dun,

Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,
Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them, —
Pomegranates, figs."

"Good folk," said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
"Give me much and many:"
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
"Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,"
They answered grinning:
"Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us." —
"Thank you," said Lizzie: "But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,

Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee." —
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.
One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil ;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood, —
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously, —
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire, —
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee, —
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her,
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her,
Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse, —
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran

As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse :
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear ;
The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, "Laura," up the garden,
"Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me ;
Laura, make much of me ;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men."

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair :
"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?" —
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her :
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,

Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth ;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast :
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her heart,
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame ;
She gorged on bitterness without a name :
Ah fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care !
Sense failed in the mortal strife :
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last ;

Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves.
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie, but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May,
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat

But poison in the blood
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood
In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together, —
"For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands."

27 April 1859.

MIRAGE°

The hope I dreamed of was a dream,
Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
For a dream's sake.

12 June 1860.

PASSING AWAY°

Passing away, saith the World, passing away:
Chances, beauty, and youth, sapped day by day:
Thy life never continueth in one stay.
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to grey
That hath won neither laurel nor bay?
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May:
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay
On my bosom for aye.
Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away:
With its burden of fear and hope, of labour and play,
Hearken what the past doth witness and say:
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.
At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day
Lo the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay;
Watch thou and pray,
Then I answered: Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away:
Winter passeth after the long delay:
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.
Though I tarry, wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray:
Arise, come away, night is past and lo it is day,
My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.
Then I answered: Yea.

31 December 1860.

PROMISES LIKE PIE-CRUST°

Promise me no promises,
So will I not promise you:
Keep we both our liberties,
Never false and never true:
Let us hold the die uncast,
Free to come as free to go:
For I cannot know your past,
And of mine what can you know?

You, so warm, may once have been
Warmer towards another one:
I, so cold, may once have seen
Sunlight, once have felt the sun:
Who shall show us if it was
Thus indeed in time of old?
Fades the image from the glass,
And the fortune is not told.

If you promised, you might grieve
For lost liberty again:
If I promised, I believe
I should fret to break the chain.
Let us be the friends we were,
Nothing more but nothing less:
Many thrive on frugal fare
Who would perish of excess.

20 April 1861.

WIFE TO HUSBAND°

Pardon the faults in me,
For the love of years ago:
Good-bye.

I must drift across the sea,
I must sink into the snow,
I must die.

You can bask in this sun,
You can drink wine, and eat:
Good-bye.
I must gird myself and run,
Though with unready feet:
I must die.

Blank sea to sail upon,
Cold bed to sleep in:
Good-bye.
While you clasp, I must be gone
For all your weeping:
I must die.

A kiss for one friend,
And a word for two, —
Good-bye: —
A lock that you must send,
A kindness you must do:
I must die.

Not a word for you,
Not a lock or kiss,
Good-bye.
We, one, must part in two;
Verily death is this:
I must die.

8 June 1861.

BETTER SO°

Fast asleep, mine own familiar friend,
Fast asleep at last:
Though the pain was strong,
Though the struggle long,
It is past:
All thy pangs are at an end.

Whilst I weep, whilst death-bells toll,
Thou art fast asleep,
With idle hands upon thy breast
And heart at rest:
Whilst I weep
Angels sing around thy singing soul.

I would not speak the word if I could raise
My dead to life:
I would not speak
If I could flush thy cheek
And rouse thy pulses' strife
And send thy feet on the once-trodden ways.

13 December 1861.

A ROYAL PRINCESS°

I a Princess king-descended, deckt with jewels, gilded, drest,
Would rather be a peasant with her baby at her breast,
For all I shine so like the sun, and am purple like the west.

Two and two my guards behind, two and two before,
Two and two on either hand, they guard me evermore;
Ie, poor dove that must not coo — eagle that must not soar.

All my fountains cast up perfumes, all my gardens grow
Scented woods and foreign spices, with all flowers in blow
That are costly, out of season as the seasons go.

All my walls are lost in mirrors, whereupon I trace
Self to right hand, self to left hand, self in every place,
Self-same solitary figure, self-same seeking face.

Then I have an ivory chair high to sit upon,
Almost like my father's chair which is an ivory throne;
There I sit uplift and upright, there I sit alone.

Alone by day, alone by night, alone days without end;
My father and my mother give me treasures, search and spend —
O my father! O my mother! have you ne'er a friend?

As I am a lofty princess, so my father is
A lofty king, accomplished in all kingly subtilties,
Holding in his strong right hand world-kingdoms' balances.

He has quarrelled with his neighbours, he has scourged his foes;
Vassal counts and princes follow where his pennon goes,
Long-descended valiant lords whom the vulture knows,

On whose track the vulture swoops, when they ride in state
To break the strength of armies and topple down the great:
Each of these my courteous servant, none of these my mate.

My father counting up his strength sets down with equal pen
So many head of cattle, head of horses, head of men;
These for slaughter, these for labour, with the how and when.

Some to work on roads, canals ; some to man his ships ;
Some to smart in mines beneath sharp overseers' whips ;
Some to trap fur-beasts in lands where utmost winter nips.

Once it came into my heart, and whelmed me like a flood,
That these too are men and women,° human flesh and blood ;
Men with hearts and men with souls, though trodden down like mud.

Our feasting was not glad that night, our music was not gay :
On my mother's graceful head I marked a thread of grey,
My father frowning at the fare seemed every dish to weigh.

I sat beside them sole princess in my exalted place,
My ladies and my gentlemen stood by me on the dais :
A mirror showed me I look old and haggard in the face ;

It showed me that my ladies all are fair to gaze upon,
Plump, plenteous-haired, to every one love's secret lore is known,
They laugh by day, they sleep by night; ah me, what is a throne?

The singing men and women sang that night as usual,
The dancers danced in pairs and sets, but music had a fall,
A melancholy windy fall as at a funeral.

Amid the toss of torches to my chamber back we swept ;
My ladies loosed my golden chain ; meantime I could have wept
To think of some in galling chains whether they waked or slept.

I took my bath of scented milk, delicately waited on :
They burned sweet things for my delight, cedar and cinnamon,
They lit my shaded silver lamp, and left me there alone.

A day went by, a week went by. One day I heard it said :
"Men are clamouring, women, children, clamouring to be fed ;
Men like famished dogs are howling in the streets for bread."

So two whispered by my door, not thinking I could hear,
Vulgar naked truth, ungarnished for a royal ear ;
Fit for cooping in the background, not to stalk so near.

But I strained my utmost sense to catch this truth, and mark :
"There are families out grazing, like cattle in the park."
"A pair of peasants must be saved, even if we build an ark."

A merry jest, a merry laugh : each strolled upon his way ;
One was my page, a lad I reared and bore with day by day ;
One was my youngest maid, as sweet and white as cream in May.

Other footsteps followed softly with a weightier tramp ;
Voices said : "Picked soldiers have been summoned from the camp,
To quell these base-born ruffians who make free to howl and stamp."

"Howl and stamp ?" one answered : "They made free to hurl a stone
At the minister's state coach, well aimed and stoutly thrown."
"There's work then for the soldiers, for this rank crop must be mown."

"One I saw, a poor old fool with ashes on his head,
Whimpering because a girl had snatched his crust of bread :
Then he dropped ; when some one raised him, it turned out he was dead."

'After us the deluge," was retorted with a laugh:
'If bread's the staff of life they must walk without a staff."
'While I've a loaf they're welcome to my blessing and the chaff."

These passed. "The king": stand up. Said my father with a smile:
'Daughter mine, your mother comes to sit with you awhile; 80
She's sad to-day, and who but you her sadness can beguile?"

He too left me. Shall I touch my harp now while I wait, —
I hear them doubling guard below before our palace gate) —
Or shall I work the last gold stitch into my veil of state;

Or shall my woman stand and read some unimpassioned scene, — 85
There's music of a lulling sort in words that pause between;
Or shall she merely fan me while I wait here for the queen?

Again I caught my father's voice in sharp word of command:
Charge" a clash of steel: "Charge again, the rebels stand.
mite and spare not, hand to hand; smite and spare not, hand to hand." 90

here swelled a tumult at the gate, high voices waxing higher;
flash of red reflected light lit the cathedral spire;
heard a cry for faggots, then I heard a yell for fire.

Sit and roast there with your meat, sit and bake there with your bread,
ou who sat to see us starve," one shrieking woman said: 95
Sit on your throne and roast with your crown upon your head."

Nay, this thing will I do, while my mother tarrieth,
I will take my fine spun gold, but not to sew therewith,
I will take my gold and gems, and rainbow fan and wreath ;°

With a ransom in my lap, a king's ransom in my hand,
I will go down to this people, will stand face to face, will stand
Where they curse king, queen, and princess of this cursed land.

They shall take all to buy them bread, take all I have to give ;
I, if I perish, perish ; they to-day shall eat and live ;
I, if I perish, perish — that's the goal I half conceive :

Once to speak before the world, rend bare my heart, and show
The lesson I have learned, which is death, is life, to know.
I, if I perish, perish : in the name of God I go.

22 October 1861.

ON THE WING°

Once in a dream (for once I dreamed of you)
We stood together in an open field ;
Above our heads two swift-winged pigeons wheeled,
Sporting at ease and courting full in view : —
When loftier still a broadening darkness flew,
Down-swooping, and a ravenous hawk revealed ;
Too weak to fight, too fond to fly, they yield ;
So farewell life and love and pleasures new.
Then as their plumes fell fluttering to the ground,
Their snow-white plumage flecked with crimson drops,
I wept, and thought I turned towards you to weep :
But you were gone ; while rustling hedgerow tops
Bent in a wind which bore to me a sound
Of far-off piteous bleat of lambs and sheep.

17 December 1862.

SEASONS°

Oh the cheerful Budding-time !
  When thorn-hedges turn to green,
When new leaves of elm and lime
  Cleave and shed their winter screen ;
Tender lambs are born and baa,
  North wind finds no snow to bring,
Vigorous Nature laughs " Ha ha ! "
  In the miracle of Spring.

Oh the gorgeous Blossom-days !
  When broad flag-flowers drink and blow;
In and out in Summer-blaze
  Dragon-flies flash to and fro ;
Ashen branches hang out keys ;
  Oaks put forth the rosy shoot,
Wandering herds wax sleek at ease,
  Lovely blossoms end in fruit.

Oh the shouting Harvest-weeks !
  Mother Earth grown fat with sheaves ;
Thrifty gleaner finds who seeks ;
  Russet-golden pomp of leaves
Crowns the woods, to fall at length ;
  Bracing winds are felt to stir,
Ocean gathers up her strength,
  Beasts renew their dwindled fur.

Oh the starving Winter lapse !
  Ice-bound, hunger-pinched, and dim ;
Dormant roots recall their saps,
  Empty nests show black and grim.

Short-lived sunshine gives no heat,
Undue buds are nipped by frost,
Snow sets forth a winding-sheet,
And all hope of life seems lost.

20 January 1863.

JUNE°

Come, cuckoo,° come:
Come again, swift swallow:
Come and welcome! when you come
Summer's sure to follow:
June the month of months
Flowers and fruitage brings too,
When green trees spread shadiest boughs,
When each wild bird sings too.

May is scant and crude,
Generous June is riper:
Birds fall silent in July,
June has its woodland piper:
Rocks upon the maple-tops
Homely-hearted linnet,
Full in hearing of his nest
And the dear ones in it.

If the year would stand
Still at June for ever,
With no further growth on land
Nor further flow of river,
If all nights were shortest nights
And longest days were all the seven,
This might be a merrier world
To my mind to live in.

5 February 1863.

MAIDEN-SONG°

Long ago and long ago
  And long ago still,
There dwelt three merry maidens
  Upon a distant hill.
One was tall Meggan,
  And one was dainty May,
But one was fair Margaret,
  More fair than I can say,
Long ago and long ago.

When Meggan pluckt the thorny rose,
  And when May pulled the brier,
Half the birds would swoop to see,
  Half the beasts drew nigher,
Half the fishes of the streams
  Would dart up to admire.
But, when Margaret pluckt a flag-flower
  Or poppy hot aflame,
All the beasts and all the birds
  And all the fishes came
To her hand more soft than snow.

Strawberry leaves and May-dew
  In brisk morning air,
Strawberry leaves and May-dew
  Make maidens fair.
"I go for strawberry leaves,"
  Meggan said one day:
"Fair Margaret can bide at home,
  But you come with me, May:
Up the hill and down the hill,
  Along the winding way
You and I are used to go."

So these two fair sisters
  Went with innocent will
Up the hill and down again,
  And round the homestead hill:
While the fairest sat at home,
  Margaret like a queen,
Like a blush-rose, like the moon
  In her heavenly sheen,
Fragrant-breathed as milky cow
  Or field of blossoming bean,
Graceful as an ivy bough
  Born to cling and lean;
Thus she sat to sing and sew.

When she raised her lustrous eyes
  A beast peeped at the door;
When she downward cast her eyes
  A fish gasped on the floor;
When she turned away her eyes
  A bird perched on the sill,
Warbling out its heart of love,
  Warbling warbling still,
With pathetic pleadings low.

Light-foot May with Meggan
  Sought the choicest spot,
Clothed with thyme-alternate grass:
  Then, while day waxed hot,
Sat at ease to play and rest,
  A gracious rest and play;
The loveliest maidens near or far,
  When Margaret was away,
Who sat at home to sing and sew.

Sun-glow flushed their comely cheeks,
  Wind-play tossed their hair,

Creeping things among the grass
  Stroked them here and there;
Meggan piped a merry note,
  A fitful wayward lay
While shrill as bird on topmost twig
  Piped merry May;
Honey-smooth the double flow.

Sped a herdsman from the vale,
  Mounting like a flame;
All on fire to hear and see,
  With floating locks he came.
Looked neither north nor south,
  Neither east nor west,
But sat him down at Meggan's feet
  As love-bird on his nest,
And wooed her with a silent awe,
  With trouble not expressed;
She sang the tears into his eyes,
  The heart out of his breast:
So he loved her, listening so.

She sang the heart out of his breast,
  The words out of his tongue;
Hand and foot and pulse he paused
  Till her song was sung.
Then he spoke up from his place
  Simple words and true:
"Scanty goods have I to give,
  Scanty skill to woo;
But I have a will to work,
  And a heart for you:
Bid me stay or bid me go."

Then Meggan mused within herself:
  "Better be first with him

Than dwell where fairer Margaret sits,
Who shines my brightness dim,
For ever second where she sits,
However fair I be:
I will be lady of his love,
And he shall worship me;
I will be lady of his herds
And stoop to his degree,
At home where kids and fatlings grow."

Sped a shepherd from the height
Headlong down to look,
(White lambs followed, lured by love
Of their shepherd's crook):
He turned neither east nor west,
Neither north nor south,
But knelt right down to May, for love
Of her sweet-singing mouth;
Forgot his flocks, his panting flocks
In parching hill-side drouth;
Forgot himself for weal or woe.

Trilled her song and swelled her song
With maiden coy caprice
In a labyrinth of throbs,
Pauses, cadences;
Clear-noted as a dropping brook,
Soft-noted like the bees,
Wild-noted as the shivering wind
Forlorn through forest-trees:
Love-noted like the wood-pigeon
Who hides herself for love,
Yet cannot keep her secret safe,
But coos and coos thereof:
Thus the notes rang loud or low.

He hung breathless on her breath ;
  Speechless, who listened well ;
Could not speak or think or wish
  Till silence broke the spell.
Then he spoke and spread his hands,
  Pointing here and there :
"See my sheep and see the lambs,
  Twin lambs which they bare.
All myself I offer you,
  All my flocks and care,
Your sweet song hath moved me so."

In her fluttered heart young May
  Mused a dubious while :
"If he loves me as he says" —
  Her lips curved with a smile :
"Where Margaret shines like the sun
  I shine but like a moon ;
If sister Meggan makes her choice
  I can make mine as soon ;
At cockcrow we were sister-maids,
  We may be brides at noon."
Said Meggan "Yes" ; May said not "No."

Fair Margaret stayed alone at home ;
  Awhile she sang her song,
Awhile sat silent, then she thought
  "My sisters loiter long."
That sultry noon had waned away,
  Shadows had waxen great :
"Surely," she thought within herself,
  "My sisters loiter late."
She rose, and peered out at the door,
  With patient heart to wait,

And heard a distant nightingale
  Complaining of its mate ;
Then down the garden slope she walked,
  Down to the garden gate,
Leaned on the rail and waited so.

The slope was lightened by her eyes.
  Like summer lightning fair,
Like rising of the haloed moon
  Lightened her glimmering hair,
While her face lightened like the sun
  Whose dawn is rosy white.
Thus crowned with maiden majesty
  She peered into the night,
Looked up the hill and down the hill,
  To left hand and to right,
Flashing like fire-flies to and fro.

Waiting thus in weariness
  She marked the nightingale
Telling, if any one would heed,
  Its old complaining tale.
Then lifted she her voice and sang,
  Answering the bird :
Then lifted she her voice and sang ;
  Such notes were never heard
From any bird when Spring's in blow.

The king of all that country,
  Coursing far, coursing near,
Curbed his amber-bitted steed,
  Coursed amain to hear ;
All his princes in his train,
  Squire and knight and peer,

With his crown upon his head,
  His sceptre in his hand,
Down he fell at Margaret's knees
  Lord king of all that land,
To her highness bending low.

Every beast and bird and fish
  Came mustering to the sound,
Every man and every maid
  From miles of country round:
Meggan on her herdsman's arm,
  With her shepherd May,
Flocks and herds trooped at their heels
  Along the hill-side way;
No foot too feeble for the ascent,
  Not any head too grey;
Some were swift and none were slow.

So Margaret sang her sisters home
  In their marriage mirth;
Sang free birds out of the sky,
  Beasts along the earth,
Sang up fishes of the deep —
  All breathing things that move —
Sang from far and sang from near
  To her lovely love;
Sang together friend and foe;

Sang a golden-bearded king
  Straightway to her feet,
Sang him silent where he knelt
  In eager anguish sweet.
But when the clear voice died away,
  When longest echoes died,

He stood up like a royal man
And claimed her for his bride.
So three maids were wooed and won
In a brief May-tide,
Long ago and long ago.

6 July 1863.

SOMEWHERE OR OTHER°

Somewhere or other there must surely be
The face not seen, the voice not heard,
The heart that not yet — never yet — ah me!
Made answer to my word.

Somewhere or other, may be near or far;
Past land and sea, clean out of sight;
Beyond the wandering moon, beyond the star
That tracks her night by night.

Somewhere or other, may be far or near;
With just a wall, a hedge, between;
With just the last leaves of the dying year
Fallen on a turf grown green.

Towards November 1863.

A FARM WALK°

The year stood at its equinox
And bluff the North was blowing,
A bleat of lambs came from the flocks,
Green hardy things were growing;
I met a maid with shining locks
Where milky kine were lowing.

She wore a kerchief on her neck,
  Her bare arm showed its dimple,
Her apron spread without a speck,
  Her air was frank and simple.

She milked into a wooden pail
  And sang a country ditty,
An innocent fond lovers' tale
  That was not wise nor witty,
Pathetically rustical,
  Too pointless for the city.

She kept in time without a beat
  As true as church-bell ringers,
Unless she tapped time with her feet,
  Or squeezed it with her fingers;
Her clear unstudied notes were sweet
  As many a practised singer's.

I stood a minute out of sight,
  Stood silent for a minute,
To eye the pail, and creamy white
  The frothing milk within it;

To eye the comely milking maid,
  Herself so fresh and creamy.
"Good day to you," at last I said;
  She turned her head to see me:
"Good day," she said with lifted head;
  Her eyes looked soft and dreamy.

And all the while she milked and milked
  The grave cow heavy-laden.
I've seen grand ladies plumed and silked,
  But not a sweeter maiden;

But not a sweeter fresher maid
Than this in homely cotton,
Whose pleasant face and silky braid
I have not yet forgotten.

Seven springs have passed since then, as I
Count with a sober sorrow;
Seven springs have come and passed me by,
And spring sets in to-morrow.

I've half a mind to shake myself
Free just for once from London,
To set my work upon the shelf
And leave it done or undone;

To run down by the early train,
Whirl down with shriek and whistle,
And feel the bluff North blow again,
And mark the sprouting thistle
Set up on waste patch of the lane
Its green and tender bristle;

And spy the scarce-blown violet banks,
Crisp primrose leaves and others,
And watch the lambs leap at their pranks
And butt their patient mothers. —

Alas one point in all my plan
My serious thoughts demur to:
Seven years have passed for maid and man,
Seven years have passed for her too;

Perhaps my rose is overblown,
Not rosy or too rosy;

Perhaps in farmhouse of her own
Some husband keeps her cosy,
Where I should show a face unknown. —
Good-bye, my wayside posy.

11 JULY 1864.

SONGS IN A CORNFIELD°

A SONG in a cornfield
Where corn begins to fall,
Where reapers are reaping,
Reaping one, reaping all.
Sing pretty Lettice,
Sing Rachel, sing May;
Only Marian cannot sing
While her sweetheart's away.

Where is he gone to
And why does he stay?
He came across the green sea
But for a day,
Across the deep green sea
To help with the hay.
His hair was curly yellow
And his eyes were grey,
He laughed a merry laugh
And said a sweet say.
Where is he gone to
That he comes not home?
To-day or to-morrow
He surely will come.
Let him haste to joy,
Lest he lag for sorrow,
For one weeps to-day
Who'll not weep to-morrow;

To-day she must weep
For gnawing sorrow,
To-night she may sleep
And not wake to-morrow.

May sang with Rachel
In the waxing warm weather,
Lettice sang with them,
They sang all together: —

"Take the wheat in your arm
Whilst day is broad above,
Take the wheat to your bosom,
But not a false false love.

Out in the fields
Summer heat gloweth,
Out in the fields
Summer wind bloweth,
Out in the fields
Summer friend showeth,
Out in the fields
Summer wheat groweth;
But in the winter,
When summer heat is dead
And summer wind has veered
And summer friend has fled,
Only summer wheat remaineth,
White cakes and bread.
Take the wheat, clasp the wheat
That's food for maid and dove;
Take the wheat to your bosom,
But not a false false love."

A silence of full noontide heat
Grew on them at their toil:

The farmer's dog woke up from sleep,
  The green snake hid her coil
Where grass stood thickest; bird and beast
  Sought shadows as they could,
The reaping men and women paused
  And sat down where they stood;
They ate and drank and were refreshed,
  For rest from toil is good.

While the reapers took their ease,
  Their sickles lying by,
Rachel sang a second strain,
  And singing seemed to sigh:—

"There goes the swallow—
  Could we but follow!
    Hasty swallow, stay,
    Point us out the way;
Look back, swallow, turn back, swallow, stop, swallow.

"There went the swallow—
  Too late to follow:
    Lost our note of way,
    Lost our chance to-day;
Good-bye, swallow, sunny swallow, wise swallow.

"After the swallow
  All sweet things follow:
    All things go their way,
    Only we must stay,
Must not follow; good-bye, swallow, good swallow."

Then listless Marian raised her head
  Among the nodding sheaves;
Her voice was sweeter than that voice;
  She sang like one who grieves:

Her voice was sweeter than its wont
Among the nodding sheaves;
All wondered while they heard her sing
Like one who hopes and grieves: —

"Deeper than the hail can smite,
Deeper than the frost can bite,
Deep asleep through day and night,
Our delight.

"Now thy sleep no pang can break,
No to-morrow bid thee wake,
Not our sobs who sit and ache
For thy sake.

"Is it dark or light below?
Oh but is it cold like snow?
Dost thou feel the green things grow
Fast or slow?

"Is it warm or cold beneath,
Oh but is it cold like death?
Cold like death, without a breath,
Cold like death?"

If he comes to-day,
He will find her weeping;
If he comes to-morrow,
He will find her sleeping;
If he comes the next day,
He'll not find her at all —
He may tear his curling hair,
Beat his breast, and call.

26 August 1864.

IF I HAD WORDS

If I had words, if I had words
  At least to vent my misery:—
But muter than the speechless herds
  I have no voice wherewith to cry.
I have no strength to lift my hands,
  I have no heart to lift mine eye,
My soul is bound with brazen bands,
  My soul is crushed and like to die.
My thoughts that wander here and there,
  That wander wander listlessly,
Bring nothing back to cheer my care,
  Nothing that I may live thereby.
My heart is broken in my breast,
  My breath is but a broken sigh —
Oh if there be a land of rest
  It is far off, it is not nigh.
If I had wings as hath a dove,
  If I had wings that I might fly,
I yet would seek the land of love
  Where fountains run which run not dry:
Though there be none that road to tell,
  And long that road is verily:
Then if I lived I should do well,
  And if I died I should but die.
If I had wings as hath a dove,
  I would not sift the what and why,
I would make haste to find out Love,
  If not to find at least to try.
I would make haste to Love, my rest —
  To Love, my truth that doth not lie:
Then if I lived it might be best,
  Or if I died I could but die.

3 September 1864.

JESSIE CAMERON°

"Jessie, Jessie Cameron,
Hear me but this once," quoth he.
"Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you," quoth she.
Day was verging toward the night
There beside the moaning sea:
Dimness overtook the light
There where the breakers be.
"O Jessie, Jessie Cameron,
I have loved you long and true."—
"Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you."

She was a careless fearless girl,
And made her answer plain,
Outspoken she to earl or churl,
Kindhearted in the main,
But somewhat heedless with her tongue
And apt at causing pain;
A mirthful maiden she and young,
Most fair for bliss or bane.
"Oh long ago I told you so,
I tell you so to-day:
Go you your way, and let me go
Just my own free way."

The sea swept in with moan and foam,
Quickening the stretch of sand;
They stood almost in sight of home;
He strove to take her hand.
"Oh can't you take your answer then,
And won't you understand?
For me you're not the man of men,
I've other plans are planned.

You're good for Madge, or good for Cis,
Or good for Kate, may be:
But what's to me the good of this
While you're not good for me?"

They stood together on the beach,
They two alone,
And louder waxed his urgent speech,
His patience almost gone:
"Oh say but one kind word to me,
Jessie, Jessie Cameron."—
"I'd be too proud to beg," quoth she,
And pride was in her tone.
And pride was in her lifted head,
And in her angry eye,
And in her foot, which might have fled
But would not fly.

Some say that he had gipsy blood,
That in his heart was guile:
Yet he had gone through fire and flood
Only to win her smile.
Some say his grandam was a witch,
A black witch from beyond the Nile,
Who kept an image in a niche
And talked with it the while.
And by her hut far down the lane
Some say they would not pass at night,
Lest they should hear an unked° strain
Or see an unked sight.

Alas for Jessie Cameron!—
The sea crept moaning, moaning nigher;
She should have hastened to begone,—
The sea swept higher, breaking by her:—

She should have hastened to her home
  While yet the west was flushed with fire, —
But now her feet are in the foam,
  The sea-foam sweeping higher.
O mother, linger at your door,
  And light your lamp to make it plain;
But Jessie she comes home no more,
  No more again.

They stood together on the strand,
  They only each by each;
Home, her home, was close at hand,
  Utterly out of reach.
Her mother in the chimney nook
  Heard a startled sea-gull screech,
But never turned her head to look
  Towards the darkening beach:
Neighbours here and neighbours there
  Heard one scream, as if a bird
Shrilly screaming cleft the air: —
  That was all they heard.

Jessie she comes home no more,
  Comes home never;
Her lover's step sounds at his door
  No more for ever.
And boats may search upon the sea
  And search along the river,
But none know where the bodies be;
  Sea-winds that shiver,
Sea-birds that breast the blast,
  Sea-waves swelling,
Keep the secret first and last
  Of their dwelling.

Whether the tide so hemmed them round
With its pitiless flow
That when they would have gone they found
No way to go;
Whether she scorned him to the last
With words flung to and fro,
Or clung to him when hope was past,
None will ever know:
Whether he helped or hindered her,
Threw up his life or lost it well,
The troubled sea for all its stir
Finds no voice to tell.

Only watchers by the dying
Have thought they heard one pray
Wordless, urgent; and replying
One seem to say him nay:
And watchers by the dead have heard
A windy swell from miles away,
With sobs and screams, but not a word
Distinct for them to say:
And watchers out at sea have caught
Glimpse of a pale gleam here or there,
Come and gone as quick as thought,
Which might be hand or hair.

October 1864.

AMOR MUNDI°

"Oh where are you going with your love-locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing along this valley track?"
"The downhill path is easy, come with me an it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back."

So they two went together in glowing August weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay to their left and right;
And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

"Oh what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are sever
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt?"
"Oh that's a meteor sent us, a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt."

"Oh what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers gro
thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?"
"A scaled and hooded worm."
"Oh what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow?"
"Oh that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term.

"Turn again, O my sweetest, — turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest, I fear, is hell's own track."
"Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for co
counting:
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back."

21 February 1865.

THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS

Till all sweet gums and juices flow,
Till the blossom of blossoms blow,
The long hours go and come and go;
The bride she sleepeth, waketh, sleepeth,
Waiting for one whose coming is slow: —
Hark! the bride weepeth.

"How long shall I wait, come heat come rime?"—
"Till the strong Prince comes, who must come in time"
(Her women say): "there's a mountain to climb,
A river to ford. Sleep, dream and sleep;
Sleep" (they say): "we've muffled the chime;
Better dream than weep."

In his world-end palace the strong Prince sat,
Taking his ease on cushion and mat;
Close at hand lay his staff and his hat.
"When wilt thou start? the bride waits, O youth."—
"Now the moon's at full; I tarried for that;
Now I start in truth.

"But tell me first, true voice of my doom,
Of my veiled bride in her maiden bloom;
Keeps she watch through glare and through gloom,
Watch for me asleep and awake?"—
"Spell-bound she watches in one white room,
And is patient for thy sake.

"By her head lilies and rosebuds grow;
The lilies droop, will the rosebuds blow?
The silver slim lilies hang the head low;
Their stream is scanty, their sunshine rare:
Let the sun blaze out, and let the stream flow,
They will blossom and wax fair.

"Red and white poppies grow at her feet.
The blood-red wait for sweet summer heat,
Wrapped in bud-coats, hairy and neat;
But the white buds swell, one day they will burst,
Will open their death cups drowsy and sweet:—
Which will open the first?"

Then a hundred sad voices lifted a wail,
And a hundred glad voices piped on the gale :
"Time is short, life is short," they took up the tale :
"Life is sweet, love is sweet, use to-day while you may ;
Love is sweet, and to-morrow may fail ;
Love is sweet, use to-day."

While the song swept by, beseeching and meek,
Up rose the Prince with a flush on his cheek,
Up he rose to stir and to seek,
Going forth in the joy of his strength :
Strong of limb if of purpose weak,
Starting at length.

Forth he set in the breezy morn,
Across green fields of nodding corn,
As goodly a Prince as ever was born,
Carolling with the carolling lark ;—
Sure his bride will be won and worn
Ere fall of the dark.

So light his step, so merry his smile,
A milkmaid loitered beside a stile,
Set down her pail and rested awhile,
A wave-haired milkmaid, rosy and white ;
The Prince, who had journeyed at least a mile,
Grew athirst at the sight.

"Will you give me a morning draught?"—
"You're kindly welcome," she said, and laughed.
He lifted the pail, new milk he quaffed ;
Then wiping his curly black beard like silk :
"Whitest cow that ever was calved
Surely gave you this milk."

Was it milk now, or was it cream?
Was she a maid, or an evil dream?
Her eyes began to glitter and gleam;
He would have gone, but he stayed instead;
Green they gleamed as he looked in them:
"Give me my fee," she said. —

"I will give you a jewel of gold." —
"Not so; gold is heavy and cold." —
"I will give you a velvet fold
Of foreign work your beauty to deck." —
"Better I like my kerchief rolled
Light and white round my neck." —

"Nay," cried he, "but fix your own fee." —
She laughed, "You may give the full moon to me,
Or else sit under this apple-tree
Here for one idle day by my side;
After that I'll let you go free,
And the world is wide."

Loth to stay, yet to leave her slack,
He half turned away, then he quite turned back:
For courtesy's sake he could not lack
To redeem his own royal pledge;
Ahead too the windy heaven lowered black
With a fire-cloven edge.

So he stretched his length in the apple-tree shade,
Lay and laughed and talked to the maid,
Who twisted her hair in a cunning braid
And writhed it in shining serpent-coils,
And held him a day and a night fast laid
In her subtle toils.

At the death of night and the birth of day,
When the owl left off his sober play,
And the bat hung himself out of the way,
Woke the song of mavis and merle,
And heaven put off its hodden grey
For mother-o'-pearl.

Peeped up daisies here and there,
Here, there, and everywhere;
Rose a hopeful lark in the air,
Spreading out towards the sun his breast;
While the moon set solemn and fair
Away in the West.

"Up, up, up," called the watchman lark,
In his clear réveillée;° "Hearken, oh hark!
Press to the high goal, fly to the mark.
Up, O sluggard, new morn is born;
If still asleep when the night falls dark,
Thou must wait a second morn."

"Up, up, up," sad glad voices swelled:
"So the tree falls and lies as it's felled.
Be thy bands loosed, O sleeper, long held
In sweet sleep whose end is not sweet.
Be the slackness girt and the softness quelled
And the slowness fleet.°"

Off he set. The grass grew rare,
A blight lurked in the darkening air,
The very moss grew hueless and spare,
The last daisy stood all astunt;
Behind his back the soil lay bare,
But barer in front.

A land of chasm and rent, a land
Of rugged blackness on either hand:
If water trickled its track was tanned
With an edge of rust to the chink;
If one stamped on stone or on sand
It returned a clink.

A lifeless land, a loveless land,
Without lair or nest on either hand:
Only scorpions jerked in the sand,
Black as black iron, or dusty pale;
From point to point sheer rock was manned
By scorpions in mail.

A land of neither life nor death,
Where no man buildeth or fashioneth,
Where none draws living or dying breath;
No man cometh or goeth there,
No man doeth, seeketh, saith,
In the stagnant air.

Some old volcanic upset must
Have rent the crust and blackened the crust,
Wrenched and ribbed it beneath its dust,
Above earth's molten centre at seethe,
Heaved and heaped it by huge upthrust
Of fire beneath.

Untrodden before, untrodden since:
Tedious land for a social Prince;
Halting, he scanned the outs and ins,
Endless, labyrinthine, grim,
Of the solitude that made him wince,
Laying wait for him.

By bulging rock and gaping cleft,
Even of half mere daylight reft,
Rueful he peered to right and left,
Muttering in his altered mood:
"The fate is hard that weaves my weft,
Though my lot be good."

Dim the changes of day to night,
Of night scarce dark to day not bright.
Still his road wound towards the right,
Still he went, and still he went,
Till one night he spied a light,
In his discontent.

Out it flashed from a yawn-mouthed cave,
Like a red-hot eye from a grave.
No man stood there of whom to crave
Rest for wayfarer plodding by:
Though the tenant were churl or knave
The Prince might try.

In he passed and tarried not,
Groping his way from spot to spot,
Towards where the cavern flare glowed hot:
An old, old mortal, cramped and double,
Was peering into a seething-pot,
In a world of trouble.

The veriest atomy he looked,
With grimy fingers clutching and crooked,
Tight skin, a nose all bony and hooked,
And a shaking, sharp, suspicious way;
Blinking, his eyes had scarcely brooked
The light of day.

Stared the Prince, for the sight was new;
Stared, but asked without more ado;
"May a weary traveller lodge with you,
Old father, here in your lair?
In your country the inns seem few,
And scanty the fare."

The head turned not to hear him speak;
The old voice whistled as through a leak
(Out it came in a quavering squeak):
"Work for wage is a bargain fit:
If there's aught of mine that you seek
You must work for it.

"Buried alive from light and air
This year is the hundredth year,
I feed my fire with a sleepless care,
Watching my potion wane or wax:
Elixir of Life is simmering there,
And but one thing lacks.

"If you're fain to lodge here with me,
Take that pair of bellows you see —
Too heavy for my old hands they be —
Take the bellows and puff and puff:
When the steam curls rosy and free
The broth's boiled enough.

"Then take your choice of all I have;
I will give you life if you crave.
Already I'm mildewed for the grave,
So first myself I must drink my fill:
But all the rest may be yours, to save
Whomever you will."

"Done," quoth the Prince, and the bargain stood.
First he piled on resinous wood,
Next plied the bellows in hopeful mood;
Thinking, "My love and I will live.
If I tarry, why life is good,
And she may forgive."

The pot began to bubble and boil;
The old man cast in essence and oil,
He stirred all up with a triple coil
Of gold and silver and iron wire,
Dredged in a pinch of virgin soil,
And fed the fire.

But still the stream curled watery white;
Night turned to day and day to night;
One thing lacked, by his feeble sight
Unseen, unguessed by his feeble mind:
Life might miss him, but Death the blight
Was sure to find.

So when the hundredth year was full
The thread was cut and finished the school.
Death snapped the old worn-out tool,
Snapped him short while he stood and stirred
(Though stiff he stood as a stiff-necked mule)
With never a word.

Thus at length the old crab was nipped.
The dead hand slipped, the dead finger dipped
In the broth as the dead man slipped:—
That same instant, a rosy red
Flushed the steam, and quivered and clipped
Round the dead old head.

The last ingredient was supplied
(Unless the dead man mistook or lied).
Up started the Prince, he cast aside
  The bellows plied through the tedious trial,
Made sure that his host had died,
    And filled a phial.

"One night's rest," thought the Prince: "This done,
Forth I speed with the rising sun:
With the morrow I rise and run,
  Come what will of wind or of weather.
This draught of life, when my bride is won,
    We'll drink together."

Thus the dead man stayed in his grave,
Self-chosen, the dead man in his cave;
There he stayed, were he fool or knave,
  Or honest seeker who had not found:
While the Prince outside was prompt to crave
    Sleep on the ground.

"If she watches, go bid her sleep;
Bid her sleep, for the road is steep:
He can sleep who holdeth her cheap,
  Sleep and wake and sleep again.
Let him sow, one day he shall reap,
    Let him sow the grain.

"When there blows a sweet garden rose,
Let it bloom and wither if no man knows:
But if one knows when the sweet thing blows,
  Knows, and lets it open and drop,
If but a nettle his garden grows
    He hath earned the crop."

Through his sleep the summons rang,
Into his ears it sobbed and it sang.
Slow he woke with a drowsy pang,
  Shook himself without much debate,
Turned where he saw green branches hang,
    Started though late.

For the black land was travelled o'er.
He should see the grim land no more.
A flowering country stretched before
  His face when the lovely day came back :
He hugged the phial of Life he bore,
    And resumed his track.

By willow courses he took his path,
Spied what a nest the kingfisher hath,
Marked the fields green to aftermath,
  Marked where the red-brown field-mouse ran,
Loitered a while for a deep stream bath,
    Yawned for a fellow-man.

Up on the hills not a soul in view,
In the vale not many nor few ;
Leaves, still leaves and nothing new.
  It's oh for a second maiden, at least,
To bear the flagon, and taste it too,
    And flavour the feast.

Lagging he moved, and apt to swerve ;
Lazy of limb, but quick of nerve.
At length the water-bed took a curve,
  The deep river swept its bankside bare ;
Waters streamed from the hill-reserve —
    Waters here, waters there.

High above and deep below,
Bursting, bubbling, swelling the flow,
Like hill torrents after the snow, —
Bubbling, gurgling, in whirling strife,
Swaying, sweeping to and fro, —
He must swim for his life.

Which way? — which way? — his eyes grew dim
With the dizzying whirl — which way to swim?
The thunderous downshoot deafened him;
Half he choked in the lashing spray:
Life is sweet, and the grave is grim —
Which way? — which way?

A flash of light, a shout from the strand:
"This way — this way; here lies the land!"
His phial clutched in one drowning hand;
He catches — misses — catches a rope;
His feet slip on the slipping sand:
Is there life? — is there hope?

Just saved, without pulse or breath —
Scarcely saved from the gulp of death;
Laid where a willow shadoweth —
Laid where a swelling turf is smooth.
(O Bride! but the Bridegroom lingereth
For all thy sweet youth.)

Kind hands do and undo,
Kind voices whisper and coo:
"I will chafe his hands" — "And I" — "And you
Raise his head, put his hair aside."
(If many laugh, one well may rue:
Sleep on, thou Bride.)

So the Prince was tended with care :
One wrung foul ooze from his clustered hair ;
Two chafed his hands, and did not spare ;
  But one propped his head that drooped awry :
Till his eyes oped, and at unaware
    They met eye to eye.

Oh a moon face in a shadowy place,
And a light touch and a winsome grace,
And a thrilling tender voice which says :
  " Safe from waters that seek the sea —
Cold waters by rugged ways —
    Safe with me."

While overhead bird whistles to bird,
And round about plays a gamesome herd :
" Safe with us " — some take up the word —
  " Safe with us, dear lord and friend :
All the sweeter if long deferred
    Is rest in the end."

Had he stayed to weigh and to scan,
He had been more or less than a man :
He did what a young man can,
  Spoke of toil and an arduous way —
Toil to-morrow, while golden ran
    The sands of to-day.

Slip past, slip fast,
Uncounted hours from first to last,
Many hours till the last is past,
  Many hours dwindling to one —
One hour whose die is cast,
    One last hour gone.

Come, gone — gone for ever —
Gone as an unreturning river —
Gone as to death the merriest liver —
  Gone as the year at the dying fall —
To-morrow, to-day, yesterday, never —
    Gone once for all.

Came at length the starting-day,
With last words, and last last words to say,
With bodiless cries from far away —
  Chiding wailing voices that rang
Like a trumpet-call to the tug and fray ;
    And thus they sang :

"Is there life ? — the lamp burns low ;
Is there hope ? — the coming is slow :
The promise promised so long ago,
  The long promise, has not been kept.
Does she live ? — does she die ? — she slumbers so
    Who so oft has wept.

"Does she live ! — does she die ? — she languisheth
As a lily drooping to death,
As a drought-worn bird with failing breath,
  As a lovely vine without a stay,
As a tree whereof the owner saith,
    "'Hew it down to-day.'"

Stung by that word, the Prince was fain
To start on his tedious road again.
He crossed the stream where a ford was plain,
  He clomb the opposite bank though steep,
And swore to himself to strain and attain
    Ere he tasted sleep.

Huge before him a mountain frowned
With foot of rock on the valley ground,
And head with snows incessant crowned,
And a cloud mantle about its strength,
And a path which the wild goat hath not found
In its breadth and length.

But he was strong to do and dare:
If a host had withstood him there,
He had braved a host with little care
In his lusty youth and his pride,
Tough to grapple though weak to snare.
He comes, O Bride.

Up he went where the goat scarce clings,
Up where the eagle folds her wings,
Past the green line of living things,
Where the sun cannot warm the cold, —
Up he went as a flame enrings
Where there seems no hold.

Up a fissure barren and black,
Till the eagles tired upon his track,
And the clouds were left behind his back,
Up till the utmost peak was past:
Then he gasped for breath and his strength fell slack —
He paused at last.

Before his face a valley spread
Where fatness laughed, wine, oil, and bread,
Where all fruit-trees their sweetness shed,
Where all birds made love to their kind,
Where jewels twinkled, and gold lay red
And not hard to find.

Midway down the mountain side
(On its green slope the path was wide)
Stood a house for a royal bride,
  Built all of changing opal stone,
The royal palace, till now described
    In his dreams alone.

Less bold than in days of yore,
Doubting now though never before,
Doubting he goes and lags the more:
  Is the time late? does the day grow dim?
Rose, will she open the crimson core
    Of her heart to him?

Above his head a tangle glows
Of wine-red roses, blushes, snows,
Closed buds and buds that unclose,
  Leaves, and moss, and prickles too;
His hand shook as he plucked a rose,
    And the rose dropped dew.

Take heart of grace! the potion of Life
May go far to woo him a wife:
If she frown, yet a lover's strife
  Lightly raised can be laid again:
A hasty word is never the knife
    To cut love in twain.

Far away stretched the royal land,
Fed by dew, by a spice-wind fanned.
Light labour more, and his foot would stand
  On the threshold, all labour done;
Easy pleasure laid at his hand,
    And the dear Bride won.

His slackening steps pause at the gate —
Does she wake or sleep? — the time is late —
Does she sleep now, or watch and wait?
She has watched, she has waited long,
Watching athwart the golden grate
With a patient song.

Fling the golden portals wide,
The Bridegroom comes to his promised Bride:
Draw the gold-stiff curtains aside,
Let them look on each other's face,
She in her meekness, he in his pride —
Day wears apace.

Day is over, the day that wore.
What is this that comes through the door,
The face covered, the feet before?
This that coming takes his breath;
This Bride not seen, to be seen no more
Save of Bridegroom Death?

Veiled figures carrying her
Sweep by yet make no stir;
There is a smell of spice and myrrh,
A bride-chant burdened with one name;
The bride-song rises steadier
Than the torches' flame: —

"Too late for love, too late for joy,"
Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
Died without a mate;

The enchanted princess in her tower
Slept, died, behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all this while
You made it wait.

"Ten years ago, five years ago,
One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
Though somewhat slow;
Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know:
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

"Is she fair now as she lies?
Once she was fair;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.
Now these are poppies in her locks,
White poppies she must wear;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
And the want graven there:
Or is the hunger fed at length,
Cast off the care?

"We never saw her with a smile
Or with a frown;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
Though tossed of down;
She little heeded what she wore,
Kirtle, or wreath, or gown;
We think her white brows often ached
Beneath her crown,

Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
That used to be so brown.

"We never heard her speak in haste;
Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
As it was meet:
Her heart sat silent through the noise
And concourse of the street:
There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;
There was no bliss drew nigh to her,
That she might run to greet.

"You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep to-day
That she is dead?
Lo we who love weep not to-day,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread."

11 October 1861 to March 1865.

EN ROUTE°

Wherefore art thou strange, and not my mother?
Thou hast stolen my heart and broken it:
Would that I might call thy sons "My brother,"°
Call thy daughters "Sister sweet":
Lying in thy lap, not in another,°
Dying at thy feet.

Farewell, land of love, Italy,
Sister-land of Paradise:
With mine own feet I have trodden thee,
Have seen with mine own eyes:
I remember, thou forgettest me,
I remember thee.

Blessed be the land that warms my heart,
And the kindly clime that cheers,
And the cordial faces clear from art,
And the tongue sweet in mine ears:
Take my heart, its truest tenderest part,
Dear land, take my tears.

JUNE 1865.

ENRICA, 1865°

SHE came among us from the South,
And made the North her home awhile;
Our dimness brightened in her smile,
Our tongue grew sweeter in her mouth.

We chilled beside her liberal glow,
She dwarfed us by her ampler scale,
Her full-blown blossom made us pale —
She Summer-like and we like snow.

We Englishwomen, trim, correct,
All minted in the selfsame mould,
Warm-hearted but of semblance cold,
All-courteous out of self-respect.

She, woman in her natural grace,
Less trammelled she by lore of school,
Courteous by nature not by rule,
Warm-hearted and of cordial face.

So for awhile she made her home
  Among us in the rigid North,
  She who from Italy came forth
And scaled the Alps and crossed the foam.

But, if she found us like our sea,
  Of aspect colourless and chill,
  Rock-girt, — like it she found us still
Deep at our deepest, strong and free.

1 JULY 1865.

HUSBAND AND WIFE°

"OH kiss me once before I go,
  To make amends for sorrow :
Oh kiss me once before we part,
  For we mayn't meet to-morrow.

"And I was wrong to force your will,
  And wrong to mar your life :
But kiss me once before we part
  Because you are my wife."

She turned her head and tossed her head,
  And puckered up her brow :
"I never kissed you yet," said she,
  "And I'll not kiss you now.

"Though I'm your wife by might and right
  And forsworn marriage vow,
I never loved you yet," said she,
  "And I don't love you now."

So he went sailing on the sea,
  And she sat crossed and dumb,
While he went sailing on the sea
  Where the storm-winds come.

He'd been away a month and day
  Counting from morn to morn:
And many buds had turned to leaves,
  And many lambs been born;

And many buds had turned to flowers
  For Spring was in a glow,
When she was laid upon her bed
  As white and cold as snow.

"Oh let me kiss my baby once,
  Once before I die:
And bring it sometimes to my grave
  To teach it where I lie.

"And tell my husband, when he comes
  Safe back from sea,
To love the baby that I leave
  If ever he loved me:

"And tell him, not for might or right
  Or forsworn marriage vow,
But for the helpless baby's sake,
  I would have kissed him now."

12 JULY 1865.

ITALIA, IO TI SALUTO°

To come back from the sweet South, to the North
  Where I was born, bred, look to die;
Come back to do my day's work in its day,
  Play out my play —
Amen, amen, say I.

To see no more the country half my own,
Nor hear the half familiar speech,
Amen, I say; I turn to that bleak North
Whence I came forth —
The South lies out of reach.

But when our swallows fly back to the South,
To the sweet South, to the sweet South,
The tears may come again into my eyes
On the old wise,
And the sweet name to my mouth.

Towards July 1865.

WHAT TO DO?

O my love and my own own deary!
What shall I do? my love is weary.
Sleep, O friend, on soft downy pillow,
Pass, O friend, as wind or as billow,
And I'll wear the willow.

No stone at his head be set,
A swelling turf be his coverlet,
Bound round with a graveyard wattle,
Hedged round from the trampling cattle
And the children's prattle.

I myself, instead of a stone,
Will sit by him to dwindle and moan:
Sit and weep with a bitter weeping,
Sit and weep where my love lies sleeping,
While my life goes creeping.

4 August 1865.

AUTUMN VIOLETS°

KEEP love for youth, and violets for the spring:
Or if these bloom when worn-out autumn grieves
Let them lie hid in double shade of leaves,
Their own, and others' dropped down withering;
For violets suit when home birds build and sing,
Not when the outbound bird a passage cleaves;
Not with dry stubble of mown harvest sheaves,
But when the green world buds to blossoming.
Keep violets for the spring, and love for youth,
Love that should dwell with beauty, mirth, and hope:
Or if a later sadder love be born,
Let this not look for grace beyond its scope,
But give itself, nor plead for answering truth —
A grateful Ruth tho' gleaning scanty corn.

BEFORE 1869.

BY WAY OF REMEMBRANCE°

REMEMBER, if I claim too much of you,
I claim it of my brother and my friend:
Have patience with me till the hidden end —
Bitter or sweet, in mercy shut from view.
Pay me my due; though I to pay your due
Am all too poor, and past what will can mend:
Thus of your bounty you must give and lend,
Still unrepaid by aught I look to do.
Still unrepaid by aught of mine on earth:
But overpaid, please God, when recompense
Beyond the mystic Jordan and new birth
Is dealt to virtue as to innocence;
When Angels singing praises in their mirth
Have borne you in their arms and fetched you hence.

Will you be there? my yearning heart has cried.
  Ah me, my love, my love, shall I be there,
  To sit down in your glory and to share
Your gladness, glowing as a virgin bride?
Or will another, dearer, fairer-eyed,
  Sit nigher to you in your jubilee,
  And mindful one of other will you be
Borne higher and higher on joy's ebbless tide?
Yea, if I love I will not grudge you this:
I too shall float upon that heavenly sea
  And sing my joyful praises without ache;
Your overflow of joy shall gladden me,
  My whole heart shall sing praises for your sake,
And find its own fulfilment in your bliss.

In Resurrection is it awfuller
  That rising of the All or of the Each —
  Of all kins of all nations of all speech,
Or one by one of *him* and *him* and *her*?
When dust reanimate begins to stir,
  Here, there, beyond, beyond, reach beyond reach;
  While every wave disgorges on its beach,
Alive or dead-in-life, some seafarer.
In Resurrection, on the day of days,
  That day of mourning throughout all the earth,
    In Resurrection may we meet again:
    No more with stricken hearts to part in twain;
  As once in sorrow one, now one in mirth,
One in our resurrection-songs of praise.

I love you and you know it — this at least,
  This comfort is mine own in all my pain:
  You know it, and can never doubt again,
And love's mere self is a continual feast:

Not oath of mine nor blessing-word of priest
  Could make my love more certain or more plain.
  Life as a rolling moon doth wax and wane —
O weary moon, still rounding, still decreased!
Life wanes: and when Love folds his wings above
  Tired joy, and less we feel his conscious pulse,
    Let us go fall asleep, dear Friend, in peace; —
    A little while, and age and sorrow cease;
  A little while, and love reborn annuls
Loss and decay and death — and all is love.

TOWARDS OCTOBER 1870.

AN ECHO FROM WILLOW-WOOD°

O ye, all ye that walk in willow-wood.
D. G. ROSSETTI.

Two gazed into a pool, he gazed and she,
  Not hand in hand, yet heart in heart, I think,
  Pale and reluctant on the water's brink,
As on the brink of parting which must be.
Each eyed the other's aspect, she and he,
  Each felt one hungering heart leap up and sink,
  Each tasted bitterness which both must drink,
There on the brink of life's dividing sea.
Lilies upon the surface, deep below
  Two wistful faces craving each for each,
    Resolute and reluctant without speech: —
A sudden ripple made the faces flow,
  One moment joined, to vanish out of reach:
    So those hearts joined, and ah were parted so.

CIRCA 1870.

THE GERMAN-FRENCH CAMPAIGN°

1870–1871

These two pieces, written during the suspense of a great nation agony, aim at expressing human sympathy, not political bias.

1

THY BROTHER'S BLOOD CRIETH

All her corn-fields rippled in the sunshine,
All her lovely vines, sweets-laden, bowed ;
Yet some weeks to harvest and to vintage :
When, as one man's hand, a cloud
Rose and spread, and, blackening, burst asunder
In rain and fire and thunder.

Is there nought to reap in the day of harvest?
Hath the vine in her day no fruit to yield?
Yea, men tread the press, but not for sweetness,
And they reap a red crop from the field.
Build barns, ye reapers, garner all aright,
Though your souls be called to-night.

A cry of tears goes up from blackened homesteads,
A cry of blood goes up from reeking earth :
Tears and blood have a cry that pierces Heaven
Through all its Hallelujah swells of mirth ;
God hears their cry, and though He tarry, yet
He doth not forget.

Mournful Mother, prone in dust and weeping,
Who shall comfort thee for those who are not?

As thou didst, men do to thee; and heap the measure
And heat the furnace sevenfold hot:
As thou once, now these to thee — who pitieth thee
From sea to sea?

O thou King, terrible in strength, and building
Thy strong future on thy past!
Though he drink the last, the King of Sheshach,
Yet he shall drink at the last.
Art thou greater than great Babylon,
Which lies overthrown?

Take heed, ye unwise among the people;
O ye fools, when will ye understand?—
He that planted the ear shall He not hear,
Nor He smite who formed the hand?
"Vengeance is Mine, is Mine," thus saith the Lord:
O Man, put up thy sword.

2

"TO-DAY FOR ME"

She sitteth still who used to dance,
She weepeth sore and more and more:—
Let us sit with thee weeping sore,
O fair France.

She trembleth as the days advance
Who used to be so light of heart:—
We in thy trembling bear a part,
Sister France.

Her eyes shine tearful as they glance :
" Who shall give back my slaughtered sons ?
Bind up," she saith, " my wounded ones." —
Alas, France !

She struggles in a deathly trance,
As in a dream her pulses stir,
She hears the nations calling her,
" France, France, France ! "

Thou people of the lifted lance,
Forbear her tears, forbear her blood ;
Roll back, roll back, thy whelming flood,
Back from France.

Eye not her loveliness askance,
Forge not for her a galling chain :
Leave her at peace to bloom again,
Vine-clad France.

A time there is for change and chance,
A time for passing of the cup :
And One abides can yet bind up
Broken France.

A time there is for change and chance :
Who next shall drink the trembling cup,
Wring out its dregs and suck them up
After France ?

TOWARDS JANUARY 1871.

VENUS'S LOOKING-GLASS°

I MARKED where lovely Venus and her court
With song and dance and merry laugh went by;
Weightless, their wingless feet seemed made to fly,
Bound from the ground, and in mid air to sport.
Left far behind I heard the dolphins snort,
Tracking their goddess with a wistful eye,
Around whose head white doves rose, wheeling high
Or low, and cooed after their tender sort.
All this I saw in Spring. Through summer heat
I saw the lovely Queen of Love no more.
But when flushed Autumn through the woodlands went
I spied sweet Venus walk amid the wheat:
Whom seeing, every harvester gave o'er
His toil, and laught and hoped and was content.

OCTOBER 1872.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING°

LOVE, that is dead and buried, yesterday
Out of his grave rose up before my face;
No recognition in his look, no trace
Of memory in his eyes dust-dimmed and grey;
While I, remembering, found no word to say,
But felt my quickened heart leap in its place;
Caught afterglow thrown back from long-set days,
Caught echoes of all music past away.
Was this indeed to meet? — I mind me yet
In youth we met when hope and love were quick,
We parted with hope dead but love alive:
I mind me how we parted then heart-sick,
Remembering, loving, hopeless, weak to strive: —
Was this to meet? Not so, we have not met.

CIRCA 1872.

SING-SONG

A NURSERY RHYME BOOK

[N. B. — The date of Sing-song as a whole is "Before 1873": but few of the compositions were written and inserted at a much later date. Those few are marked "Before 1894."]

RHYMES DEDICATED
WITHOUT PERMISSION
TO THE BABY
WHO SUGGESTED THEM

Angels at the foot,
And Angels at the head,
And like a curly little lamb
My pretty babe in bed.

Love me, — I love you,
Love me, my baby;
Sing it high, sing it low,
Sing it as may be.

Mother's arms under you,
Her eyes above you;
Sing it high, sing it low,
Love me, — I love you.

My baby has a father and a mother,
Rich little baby!
Fatherless, motherless, I know another
Forlorn as may be:
Poor little baby!

Our little baby fell asleep,
And may not wake again
For days and days, and weeks and weeks;
But then he'll wake again,
And come with his own pretty look,
And kiss Mamma again.

"Kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!"
Crows the cock before the morn;
"Kikirikee! kikirikee!"
Roses in the east are born.

"Kookoorookoo! kookoorookoo!"
Early birds begin their singing;
"Kikirikee! kikirikee!"
The day, the day, the day is springing.

Baby cry—
Oh fie!—
At the physic in the cup:
Gulp it twice
And gulp it thrice,
Baby gulp it up.

Eight o'clock;
The postman's knock!
Five letters for Papa;
One for Lou,
And none for you,
And three for dear Mamma.

Bread and milk for breakfast,
And woollen frocks to wear,
And a crumb for robin redbreast
On the cold days of the year.

There's snow on the fields,
And cold in the cottage,
While I sit in the chimney nook
Supping hot pottage.

My clothes are soft and warm,
Fold upon fold,
But I'm so sorry for the poor
Out in the cold.

Dead in the cold, a song-singing thrush,
Dead at the foot of a snowberry bush, —
Weave him a coffin of rush,
Dig him a grave where the soft mosses grow,
Raise him a tombstone of snow.

I dug and dug amongst the snow,
And thought the flowers would never grow;
I dug and dug amongst the sand,
And still no green thing came to hand.

Melt, O snow! the warm winds blow
To thaw the flowers and melt the snow;
But all the winds from every land
Will rear no blossom from the sand.

A CITY plum is not a plum;
A dumb-bell is no bell, though dumb;
A party rat is not a rat;
A sailor's cat is not a cat;
A soldier's frog is not a frog;
A captain's log is not a log.

YOUR brother has a falcon,
Your sister has a flower;
But what is left for mannikin,
Born within an hour?

I'll nurse you on my knee, my knee,
My own little son;
I'll rock you, rock you, in my arms,
My least little one.

HEAR what the mournful linnets say:
"We built our nest compact and warm,
But cruel boys came round our way
And took our summerhouse by storm.

"They crushed the eggs so neatly laid;
So now we sit with drooping wing,
And watch the ruin they have made,
Too late to build, too sad to sing."

A BABY'S cradle with no baby in it,
A baby's grave where autumn leaves drop sere;
The sweet soul gathered home to Paradise,
The body waiting here.

Hop-o'-my-thumb and little Jack Horner,
What do you mean by tearing and fighting?
Sturdy dog Trot close round the corner,
I never caught him growling and biting.

Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth,
Love is like a rose the joy of all the earth;
Faith is like a lily lifted high and white,
Love is like a lovely rose the world's delight;
Harebells and sweet lilies show a thornless growth,
But the rose with all its thorns excels them both.

O wind, why do you never rest,
Wandering, whistling to and fro,
Bringing rain out of the west,
From the dim north bringing snow?

Crying, my little one, footsore and weary?
Fall asleep, pretty one, warm on my shoulder:
I must tramp on through the winter night dreary,
While the snow falls on me colder and colder.

You are my one, and I have not another;
Sleep soft, my darling, my trouble and treasure;
Sleep warm and soft in the arms of your mother,
Dreaming of pretty things, dreaming of pleasure.

Growing in the vale
By the uplands hilly,
Growing straight and frail,
Lady Daffadowndilly.

In a golden crown,
And a scant green gown
While the spring blows chilly,
Lady Daffadown,
Sweet Daffadowndilly.

A LINNET in a gilded cage, —
A linnet on a bough, —
In frosty winter one might doubt
Which bird is luckier now.

But let the trees burst out in leaf,
And nests be on the bough, —
Which linnet is the luckier bird,
Oh who could doubt it now?

WRENS and robins in the hedge,
Wrens and robins here and there;
Building, perching, pecking, fluttering,
Everywhere!

MY baby has a mottled fist,
My baby has a neck in creases;
My baby kisses and is kissed,
For he's the very thing for kisses.

WHY did baby die,
Making Father sigh,
Mother cry?

Flowers, that bloom to die,
Make no reply
Of "why?"
But bow and die.

If all were rain and never sun,
No bow could span the hill;
If all were sun and never rain,
There'd be no rainbow still.

O wind, where have you been,
That you blow so sweet?
Among the violets
Which blossom at your feet.

The honeysuckle waits
For Summer and for heat;
But violets in the chilly Spring
Make the turf so sweet.

Brownie, Brownie, let down your milk,
White as swansdown and smooth as silk,
Fresh as dew and pure as snow:
For I know where the cowslips blow,
And you shall have a cowslip wreath
No sweeter scented than your breath.

Before 1894.

On the grassy banks
Lambkins at their pranks;
Woolly sisters, woolly brothers,
Jumping off their feet,
While their woolly mothers
Watch by them and bleat.

Rushes in a watery place,
And reeds in a hollow;
A soaring skylark in the sky,
A darting swallow;
And where pale blossom used to hang
Ripe fruit to follow.

Minnie and Mattie
And fat little May,
Out in the country,
Spending a day.

Such a bright day,
With the sun glowing,
And the trees half in leaf,
And the grass growing.

Pinky white pigling
Squeals through his snout,
Woolly white lambkin
Frisks all about.

Cluck! cluck! the nursing hen
Summons her folk, —
Ducklings all downy soft,
Yellow as yolk.

Cluck! cluck! the mother hen
  Summons her chickens
To peck the dainty bits
  Found in her pickings.

Minnie and Mattie
  And May carry posies,
Half of sweet violets,
  Half of primroses.

Give the sun time enough,
  Glowing and glowing,
He'll rouse the roses
  And bring them blowing.

Don't wait for roses
  Losing to-day,
O Minnie, Mattie,
  And wise little May.

Violets and primroses
  Blossom to-day
For Minnie and Mattie
  And fat little May.

Heartsease in my garden bed,
  With sweetwilliam white and red,
Honeysuckle on my wall: —
  Heartsease blossoms in my heart
When sweet William comes to call;
  But it withers when we part,
And the honey-trumpets fall.

"If I were a Queen,
What would I do?
I'd make you King,
And I'd wait on you."

"If I were a King,
What would I do?
I'd make you Queen,
For I'd marry you."

What are heavy? sea-sand and sorrow:
What are brief? to-day and to-morrow:
What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth:
What are deep? the ocean and truth.

Stroke a flint, and there is nothing to admire:
Strike a flint, and forthwith flash out sparks of fire.

Before 1894.

There is but one May in the year,
And sometimes May is wet and cold;
There is but one May in the year
Before the year grows old.

Yet though it be the chilliest May,
With least of sun and most of showers,
Its wind and dew, its night and day,
Bring up the flowers.

THE summer nights are short
Where northern days are long:
For hours and hours lark after lark
Trills out his song.

The summer days are short
Where southern nights are long:
Yet short the night when nightingales
Trill out their song.

THE days are clear,
Day after day,
When April's here,
That leads to May,
And June
Must follow soon:
Stay, June, stay! —
If only we could stop the moon
And June!

"TWIST me a crown of wind-flowers;
That I may fly away
To hear the singers at their song,
And players at their play."

"Put on your crown of wind-flowers:
But whither would you go?"
"Beyond the surging of the sea
And the storms that blow."

"Alas! your crown of wind-flowers
Can never make you fly:
I twist them in a crown to-day,
And to-night they die."

Brown and furry
Caterpillar in a hurry
Take your walk
To the shady leaf, or stalk,
Or what not,
Which may be the chosen spot.
No toad spy you,
Hovering bird of prey pass by you;
Spin and die,
To live again a butterfly.

A Toadstool comes up in a night, —
  Learn the lesson, little folk: —
An oak grows on a hundred years,
  But then it is an oak.

A Pocket handkerchief to hem —
  Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!
How many stitches it will take
  Before it's done, I fear.

Yet set a stitch and then a stitch,
  And stitch and stitch away,
Till stitch by stitch the hem is done —
  And after work is play!

If a pig wore a wig,
  What could we say?
Treat him as a gentleman,
  And say "Good-day."

If his tail chanced to fail,
What could we do?—
Send him to the tailoress
To get one new.

Seldom "can't,"
Seldom "don't";
Never "shan't,"
Never "won't."

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1 and 1 are 2 —
That's for me and you.

2 and 2 are 4 —
That's a couple more.

3 and 3 are 6
Barley-sugar sticks.

4 and 4 are 8
Tumblers at the gate.

5 and 5 are 10
Bluff seafaring men.

6 and 6 are 12
Garden lads who delve.

7 and 7 are 14
Young men bent on sporting.

8 and 8 are 16
Pills the doctor's mixing.

9 and 9 are 18
Passengers kept waiting.

10 and 10 are 20
Roses — pleasant plenty!

11 and 11 are 22
Sums for brother George to do.

12 and 12 are 24
Pretty pictures, and no more.

How many seconds in a minute?
Sixty, and no more in it.

How many minutes in an hour?
Sixty for sun and shower.

How many hours in a day?
Twenty-four for work and play.

How many days in a week?
Seven both to hear and speak.

How many weeks in a month?
Four, as the swift moon runn'th.

How many months in a year?
Twelve the almanack makes clear

How many years in an age?
One hundred says the sage.

How many ages in time?
No one knows the rhyme.

WHAT will you give me for my pound?
Full twenty shillings round.
What will you give me for my shilling?
Twelve pence to give I'm willing.
What will you give me for my penny?
Four farthings, just so many.

JANUARY cold desolate;
February all dripping wet;
March wind ranges;
April changes;
Birds sing in tune
To flowers of May,
And sunny June
Brings longest day;
In scorched July
The storm-clouds fly
Lightning-torn;
August bears corn,
September fruit;
In rough October
Earth must disrobe her;
Stars fall and shoot
In keen November;
And night is long
And cold is strong
In bleak December.

WHAT is pink? a rose is pink
By the fountain's brink.
What is red? a poppy's red
In its barley bed.

What is blue? the sky is blue
Where the clouds float thro'.
What is white? a swan is white
Sailing in the light.
What is yellow? pears are yellow,
Rich and ripe and mellow.
What is green? the grass is green,
With small flowers between.
What is violet? clouds are violet
In the summer twilight.
What is orange? why, an orange,
Just an orange!

MOTHER shake the cherry-tree,
Susan catch a cherry;
Oh how funny that will be,
Let's be merry!

One for brother, one for sister,
Two for mother more,
Six for father, hot and tired,
Knocking at the door.

A PIN has a head, but has no hair;
A clock has a face, but no mouth there;
Needles have eyes, but they cannot see;
A fly has a trunk without lock or key;
A timepiece may lose, but cannot win;
A corn-field dimples without a chin;
A hill has no leg, but has a foot;
A wine-glass a stem, but not a root;

A watch has hands, but no thumb or finger;
A boot has a tongue, but is no singer;
Rivers run, though they have no feet;
A saw has teeth, but it does not eat;
Ash-trees have keys, yet never a lock;
And baby crows, without being a cock.

Hopping frog, hop here and be seen,
I'll not pelt you with stick or stone:
Your cap is laced and your coat is green;
Good-bye, we'll let each other alone.

Plodding toad, plod here and be looked at,
You the finger of scorn is crooked at:
But though you're lumpish, you're harmless too;
You won't hurt me, and I won't hurt you.

Where innocent bright-eyed daisies are,
With blades of grass between,
Each daisy stands up like a star
Out of a sky of green.

The city mouse lives in a house;—
The garden mouse lives in a bower,
He's friendly with the frogs and toads,
And sees the pretty plants in flower.

The city mouse eats bread and cheese;—
The garden mouse eats what he can;
We will not grudge him seeds and stalks,
Poor little timid furry man.

WHAT does the donkey bray about?
What does the pig grunt through his snout?
What does the goose mean by a hiss?
Oh, Nurse, if you can tell me this,
I'll give you such a kiss.

The cockatoo calls "cockatoo,"
The magpie chatters "how d' ye do?"
The jackdaw bids me "go away,"
Cuckoo cries "cuckoo" half the day:
What do the others say?

THREE plum buns
To eat here at the stile
In the clover meadow,
For we have walked a mile.

One for you, and one for me,
And one left over:
Give it to the boy who shouts
To scare sheep from the clover.

A MOTHERLESS soft lambkin
Alone upon a hill;
No mother's fleece to shelter him
And wrap him from the cold:—
I'll run to him and comfort him,
I'll fetch him, that I will;
I'll care for him and feed him
Until he's strong and bold.

Dancing on the hill-tops,
Singing in the valleys,
Laughing with the echoes,
Merry little Alice.

Playing games with lambkins
In the flowering valleys,
Gathering pretty posies,
Helpful little Alice.

If her father's cottage
Turned into a palace,
And he owned the hill-tops
And the flowering valleys,
She'd be none the happier,
Happy little Alice.

When fishes set umbrellas up
If the rain-drops run,
Lizards will want their parasols
To shade them from the sun.

The peacock has a score of eyes,
With which he cannot see;
The cod-fish has a silent sound,
However that may be;

No dandelions tell the time,
Although they turn to clocks;
Cat's-cradle does not hold the cat,
Nor foxglove fit the fox.

Pussy has a whiskered face,
Kitty has such pretty ways ;
Doggie scampers when I call,
And has a heart to love us all.

The dog lies in his kennel,
And Puss purrs on the rug,
And baby perches on my knee
For me to love and hug.

Pat the dog and stroke the cat,
Each in its degree ;
And cuddle and kiss my baby,
And baby kiss me.

If hope grew on a bush,
And joy grew on a tree,
What a nosegay for the plucking
There would be !

But oh in windy autumn,
When frail flowers wither,
What should we do for hope and joy,
Fading together ?

I planted a hand
And there came up a palm,
I planted a heart
And there came up balm.

Then I planted a wish,
But there sprang a thorn,
While heaven frowned with thunder
And earth sighed forlorn.

Under the ivy bush
One sits sighing,
And under the willow tree
One sits crying: —

Under the ivy bush
Cease from your sighing,
But under the willow tree
Lie down a-dying.

I am a King,
Or an Emperor rather,
I wear crown-imperial
And prince's-feather;
Golden-rod is the sceptre
I wield and wag,
And a broad purple flag-flower
Waves for my flag.

Elder the pithy
With old-man and sage,
These are my councillors
Green in old age;
Lords-and-ladies in silence
Stand round me and wait,
While gay ragged-robin
Makes bows at my gate.

Before 1894.

THERE is one that has a head without an eye,
And there's one that has an eye without a head:
You may find the answer if you try;
And when all is said,
Half the answer hangs upon a thread.

IF a mouse could fly,
Or if a crow could swim,
Or if a sprat could walk and talk,
I'd like to be like him.

If a mouse could fly,
He might fly away;
Or if a crow could swim,
It might turn him grey;
Or if a sprat could walk and talk,
What would he find to say?

SING me a song.—
What shall I sing?—
Three merry sisters
Dancing in a ring,
Light and fleet upon their feet
As birds upon the wing.

Tell me a tale.—
What shall I tell?—
Two mournful sisters,
And a tolling knell,
Tolling ding and tolling dong,
Ding dong bell.

THE lily has an air,
And the snowdrop a grace,
And the sweetpea a way,
And the heartsease a face, —
Yet there's nothing like the rose
When she blows.

MARGARET has a milking-pail,
And she rises early ;
Thomas has a threshing-flail,
And he's up betimes
Sometimes crossing through the grass
Where the dew lies pearly,
They say "Good-morrow" as they pass
By the leafy limes.

IN the meadow — what in the meadow ?
Bluebells, buttercups, meadowsweet,
And fairy rings for the children's feet
In the meadow.

In the garden — what in the garden?
Jacob's-ladder and Solomon's-seal,
And Love-lies-bleeding beside All-heal
In the garden.

A FRISKY lamb
And a frisky child
Playing their pranks
In a cowslip meadow :

The sky all blue
And the air all mild
And the fields all sun
And the lanes half shadow.

Mix a pancake,
Stir a pancake,
Pop it in the pan;
Fry the pancake,
Toss the pancake,—
Catch it if you can.

The wind has such a rainy sound
Moaning through the town,
The sea has such a windy sound,—
Will the ships go down?

The apples in the orchard
Tumble from their tree.—
Oh will the ships go down, go down,
In the windy sea?

Three little children
On the wide wide earth,
Motherless children—
Cared for from their birth
By tender angels.

Three little children
On the wide wide sea,
Motherless children—
Safe as safe can be
With guardian ange

Fly away, fly away over the sea,
Sun-loving swallow, for summer is done;
Come again, come again, come back to me,
Bringing the summer and bringing the sun.

Minnie bakes oaten cakes,
Minnie brews ale,
All because her Johnny's coming
Home from sea.
And she glows like a rose,
Who was so pale,
And "Are you sure the church clock goes?"
Says she.

A white hen sitting
On white eggs three:
Next, three speckled chickens
As plump as plump can be.

An owl and a hawk
And a bat come to see;
But chicks beneath their mother's wing
Squat safe as safe can be.

Currants on a bush,
And figs upon a stem,
And cherries on a bending bough,
And Ned to gather them.

PLAYING at bob cherry
Tom and Nell and Hugh:
Cherry bob! cherry bob!
There's a bob for you.

Tom bobs a cherry
For gaping snapping Hugh,
While curly-pated Nelly
Snaps at it too.

Look, look, look—
Oh what a sight to see!
The wind is playing cherry bob
With the cherry tree.

BEFORE 1894.

I HAVE but one rose in the world,
And my one rose stands a-drooping:
Oh when my single rose is dead
There'll be but thorns for stooping.

Rosy maiden Winifred,
With a milkpail on her head,
Tripping through the corn,
While the dew lies on the wheat
In the sunny morn.
Scarlet shepherd's-weatherglass
Spreads wide open at her feet
As they pass;
Cornflowers give their almond smell
While she brushes by,
And a lark sings from the sky
"All is well."

Blind from my birth,
Where flowers are springing
I sit on earth
All dark.
Hark! hark!
A lark is singing,
His notes are all for me,
For me his mirth:—
Till some day I shall see
Beautiful flowers
And birds in bowers
Where all joy-bells are ringing.

Before 1894.

When the cows come home the milk is coming,
Honey's made while the bees are humming;
Duck and drake on the rushy lake,
And the deer live safe in the breezy brake;
And timid, funny, brisk little bunny
Winks his nose and sits all sunny.

Roses blushing red and white,
For delight;
Honeysuckle wreaths above,
For love;
Dim sweet-scented heliotrope,
For hope;
Shining lilies tall and straight,
For royal state;
Dusky pansies, let them be
For memory;
With violets of fragrant breath,
For death.

"DING a ding,"
The sweet bells sing,
And say,
"Come, all be gay,"
For a wedding day.

"Dong a dong,"
The bells sigh long,
And call,
"Weep one, weep all,"
For a funeral.

A RING upon her finger,
Walks the bride,
With the bridegroom tall and handsome
At her side.

A veil upon her forehead,
Walks the bride,
With the bridegroom proud and merry
At her side.

Fling flowers beneath the footsteps
Of the bride;
Fling flowers before the bridegroom
At her side.

"FERRY me across the water,
Do, boatman, do."
"If you've a penny in your purse
I'll ferry you."

"I have a penny in my purse,
  And my eyes are blue;
So ferry me across the water,
  Do, boatman, do."

"Step into my ferry-boat,
  Be they black or blue,
And for the penny in your purse
  I'll ferry you."

When a mounting skylark sings
  In the sunlit summer morn,
I know that heaven is up on high,
  And on earth are fields of corn.

But when a nightingale sings
  In the moonlit summer even,
I know not if earth is merely earth,
  Only that heaven is heaven.

Who has seen the wind?
  Neither I nor you:
But when the leaves hang trembling
  The wind is passing thro'.

Who has seen the wind?
  Neither you nor I:
But when the trees bow down their heads
  The wind is passing by.

THE horses of the sea
Rear a foaming crest,
But the horses of the land
Serve us the best.

The horses of the land
Munch corn and clover,
While the foaming sea-horses
Toss and turn over.

O SAILOR, come ashore,
What have you brought for me?
Red coral, white coral,
Coral from the sea.

I did not dig it from the ground,
Nor pluck it from a tree;
Feeble insects made it
In the stormy sea.

A DIAMOND or a coal?
A diamond, if you please:
Who cares about a clumsy coal
Beneath the summer trees?

A diamond or a coal?
A coal, sir, if you please:
One comes to care about the coal
What time the waters freeze.

AN emerald is as green as grass;
A ruby red as blood;

A sapphire shines as blue as heaven ;
A flint lies in the mud.

A diamond is a brilliant stone,
To catch the world's desire;
An opal holds a fiery spark ;
But a flint holds fire.

Boats sail on the rivers,
And ships sail on the seas ;
But clouds that sail across the sky
Are prettier far than these.

There are bridges on the rivers,
As pretty as you please ;
But the bow that bridges heaven,
And overtops the trees,
And builds a road from earth to sky,
Is prettier far than these.

The lily has a smooth stalk,
Will never hurt your hand ;
But the rose upon her briar
Is lady of the land.

There's sweetness in an apple tree,
And profit in the corn ;
But lady of all beauty
Is a rose upon a thorn.

When with moss and honey
She tips her bending briar,
And half unfolds her glowing heart,
She sets the world on fire.

HURT no living thing:
Ladybird, nor butterfly,
Nor moth with dusty wing,
Nor cricket chirping cheerily,
Nor grasshopper so light of leap,
Nor dancing gnat, nor beetle fat,
Nor harmless worms that creep.

I CAUGHT a little ladybird
That flies far away;
I caught a little lady wife
That is both staid and gay.

Come back, my scarlet ladybird,
Back from far away;
I weary of my dolly wife,
My wife that cannot play.

She's such a senseless wooden thing
She stares the livelong day;
Her wig of gold is stiff and cold
And cannot change to grey.

BEFORE 1873 AND 1894.

ALL the bells were ringing
And all the birds were singing,
When Molly sat down crying
For her broken doll:
O you silly Moll!
Sobbing and sighing
For a broken doll,
When all the bells are ringing
And all the birds are singing.

Wee wee husband,
  Give me some money,
I have no comfits,
  And I have no honey.

Wee wee wifie,
  I have no money,
Milk, nor meat, nor bread to eat,
  Comfits, nor honey.

I have a little husband
  And he is gone to sea;
The winds that whistle round his ship
  Fly home to me.

The winds that sigh about me
  Return again to him;
So I would fly, if only I
  Were light of limb.

Before 1873 and 1894.

The dear old woman in the lane
  Is sick and sore with pains and aches,
We'll go to her this afternoon,
  And take her tea and eggs and cakes.

We'll stop to make the kettle boil,
  And brew some tea, and set the tray,
And poach an egg, and toast a cake,
  And wheel her chair round, if we may.

Before 1873 and 1894.

SWIFT and sure the swallow,
Slow and sure the snail:
Slow and sure may miss his way,
Swift and sure may fail.

"I DREAMT I caught a little owl
And the bird was blue —"

"But you may hunt for ever
And not find such an one."

"I dreamt I set a sunflower,
And red as blood it grew —"

"But such a sunflower never
Bloomed beneath the sun."

WHAT does the bee do?
Bring home honey.
And what does Father do?
Bring home money.
And what does Mother do?
Lay out the money.
And what does baby do?
Eat up the honey.

I HAVE a Poll parrot,
And Poll is my doll,
And my nurse is Polly,
And my sister Poll.

"Polly!" cried Polly,
"Don't tear Polly dolly" —
While soft-hearted Poll
Trembled for the doll.

BEFORE 1873 AND 1894.

A HOUSE of cards
Is neat and small:
Shake the table,
It must fall.

Find the Court cards
One by one;
Raise it, roof it, —
Now it's done: —
Shake the table!
That's the fun.

THE rose with such a bonny blush,
What has the rose to blush about?
If it's the sun that makes her flush,
What's in the sun to flush about?

THE rose that blushes rosy red,
She must hang her head;
The lily that blows spotless white,
She may stand upright.

OH fair to see
Bloom-laden cherry tree,
Arrayed in sunny white,
An April day's delight;
Oh fair to see!

Oh fair to see
Fruit-laden cherry tree,
With balls of shining red
Decking a leafy head;
Oh fair to see!

Clever little Willie wee,
Bright-eyed, blue-eyed little fellow;
Merry little Margery
With her hair all yellow

Little Willie in his heart
Is a sailor on the sea,
And he often cons a chart
With sister Margery.

Before 1873 and 1894.

The peach tree on the southern wall
Has basked so long beneath the sun,
Her score of peaches great and small
Bloom rosy, every one.

A peach for brothers, one for each,
A peach for you and a peach for me;
But the biggest, rosiest, downiest peach
For Grandmamma with her tea.

Before 1873 and 1894.

A rose has thorns as well as honey,
I'll not have her for love or money;
An iris grows so straight and fine
That she shall be no friend of mine;

Snowdrops like the snow would chill me ;
Nightshade would caress and kill me ;
Crocus like a spear would fright me ;
Dragon's-mouth might bark or bite me ;
Convolvulus but blooms to die ;
A wind-flower suggests a sigh ;
Love-lies-bleeding makes me sad ;
And poppy-juice would drive me mad : —
But give me holly, bold and jolly,
Honest, prickly, shining holly ;
Pluck me holly leaf and berry
For the day when I make merry.

Is the moon tired? she looks so pale
Within her misty veil :
She scales the sky from east to west,
And takes no rest.

Before the coming of the night
The moon shows papery white ;
Before the dawning of the day
She fades away.

If stars dropped out of heaven,
And if flowers took their place,
The sky would still look very fair,
And fair earth's face.

Winged angels might fly down to us
To pluck the stars,
But we could only long for flowers
Beyond the cloudy bars.

"Good-bye in fear, good-bye in sorrow,
Good-bye and all in vain,
Never to meet again, my dear"—
"Never to part again."
"Good-bye to-day, good-bye to-morrow,
Good-bye till earth shall wane,
Never to meet again, my dear"—
"Never to part again."

If the sun could tell us half
That he hears and sees,
Sometimes he would make us laugh,
Sometimes make us cry:
Think of all the birds that make
Homes among the trees;
Think of cruel boys who take
Birds that cannot fly.

If the moon came from heaven,
Talking all the way,
What could she have to tell us,
And what could she say?

"I've seen a hundred pretty things,
And seen a hundred gay;
But only think: I peep by night
And do not peep by day!"

O Lady Moon, your horns point toward the east;
Shine, be increased:
O Lady Moon, your horns point toward the west;
Wane, be at rest.

WHAT do the stars do
Up in the sky,
Higher than the wind can blow,
Or the clouds can fly?

Each star in its own glory
Circles, circles still;
As it was lit to shine and set,
And do its Maker's will.

MOTHERLESS baby and babyless mother,
Bring them together to love one another.

CRIMSON curtains round my mother's bed,
Silken soft as may be;
Cool white curtains round about my bed,
For I am but a baby.

BABY lies so fast asleep
That we cannot wake her:
Will the Angels clad in white
Fly from heaven to take her?

Baby lies so fast asleep
That no pain can grieve her;
Put a snowdrop in her hand,
Kiss her once and leave her.

I KNOW a baby, such a baby, —
Round blue eyes and cheeks of pink,

Such an elbow furrowed with dimples,
Such a wrist where creases sink.

"Cuddle and love me, cuddle and love me,"
Crows the mouth of coral pink:
Oh the bald head, and oh the sweet lips,
And oh the sleepy eyes that wink!

LULLABY, oh lullaby!
Flowers are closed and lambs are sleeping;
Lullaby, oh lullaby!
Stars are up, the moon is peeping;
Lullaby, oh lullaby!
While the birds are silence keeping,
(Lullaby, oh lullaby!)
Sleep, my baby, fall a-sleeping,
Lullaby, oh lullaby!

LIE a-bed,
Sleepy head,
Shut up eyes, bo-peep;
Till day-break
Never wake:—
Baby, sleep.

BEFORE 1873.

A GREEN CORNFIELD°

"And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest."

THE earth was green, the sky was blue:
I saw and heard one sunny morn
A skylark hang between the two,
A singing speck above the corn;

A stage below, in gay accord,
White butterflies danced on the wing,
And still the singing skylark soared,
And silent sank and soared to sing.

The cornfield stretched a tender green
To right and left beside my walks;
I knew he had a nest unseen
Somewhere among the million stalks.

And as I paused to hear his song
While swift the sunny moments slid,
Perhaps his mate sat listening long,
And listened longer than I did.

BEFORE 1876.

A BRIDE SONG°

THROUGH the vales to my love!
To the happy small nest of home
Green from basement to roof;
Where the honey-bees come
To the window-sill flowers,
And dive from above,
Safe from the spider that weaves
Her warp and her woof
In some outermost leaves.

Through the vales to my love!
In sweet April hours
All rainbows and showers,
While dove answers dove, —
In beautiful May,
When the orchards are tender

And frothing with flowers, —
In opulent June
When the wheat stands up slender
By sweet-smelling hay,
And half the sun's splendour
Descends to the moon.

Through the vales to my love!
Where the turf is so soft to the feet
And the thyme makes it sweet,
And the stately foxglove
Hangs silent its exquisite bells;
And where water wells
The greenness grows greener,
And bulrushes stand
Round a lily to screen her.

Nevertheless, if this land,
Like a garden to smell and to sight,
Were turned to a desert of sand;
Stripped bare of delight,
All its best gone to worst,
For my feet no repose,
No water to comfort my thirst,
And heaven like a furnace above, —
The desert would be
As gushing of waters to me,
The wilderness be as a rose,
If it led me to thee,
O my love.

BEFORE 1876.

CONFLUENTS°

As rivers seek the sea,
  Much more deep than they,
So my soul seeks thee
  Far away;
As running rivers moan
On their course alone,
  So I moan
  Left alone.

As the delicate rose
  To the sun's sweet strength
Doth herself unclose,
  Breadth and length;
So spreads my heart to thee
Unveiled utterly,
  I to thee
  Utterly.

As morning dew exhales
  Sunwards pure and free
So my spirit fails
  After thee.
As dew leaves not a trace
On the green earth's face;
  I, no trace
  On thy face.

Its goal the river knows,
  Dewdrops find a way,
Sunlight cheers the rose
  In her day:

Shall I, lone sorrow past,
Find thee at the last?
Sorrow past,
Thee at last?

BEFORE 1876.

BIRD RAPTURES°

THE sunrise wakes the lark to sing,
The moonrise wakes the nightingale.
Come darkness, moonrise, everything
That is so silent, sweet, and pale,
Come, so ye wake the nightingale.

Make haste to mount, thou wistful moon,
Make haste to wake the nightingale:
Let silence set the world in tune
To hearken to that wordless tale
Which warbles from the nightingale.

O herald skylark, stay thy flight
One moment, for a nightingale
Floods us with sorrow and delight.
To-morrow thou shalt hoist the sail;
Leave us to-night the nightingale.

BEFORE 1876.

VALENTINES TO MY MOTHER°

1876

FAIRER than younger beauties, more beloved
Than many a wife,
By stress of Time's vicissitudes unmoved
From settled calm of life;

Endearing rectitude to those who watch
The verdict of your face,
Raising and making gracious those who catch
A semblance of your grace:

With kindly lips of welcome, and with pleased
Propitious eyes benign,
Accept a kiss of homage from your least
Last Valentine.

1882

My blessed Mother dozing in her chair
On Christmas Day seemed an embodied Love,
A comfortable Love with soft brown hair
Softened and silvered to a tint of dove;
A better sort of Venus with an air
Angelical from thoughts that dwell above;
A wiser Pallas in whose body fair
Enshrined a blessed soul looks out thereof.
Winter brought holly then; now Spring has brought
Paler and frailer snowdrops shivering;
And I have brought a simple humble thought —
I her devoted duteous Valentine —
A lifelong thought which thrills this song I sing,
A lifelong love to this dear Saint of mine.

YET A LITTLE WHILE°

I DREAMED and did not seek: to-day I seek
Who can no longer dream;
But now am all behindhand, waxen weak,
And dazed amid so many things that gleam
Yet are not what they seem.

I dreamed and did not work: to-day I work,
Kept wide awake by care
And loss, and perils dimly guessed to lurk;
I work and reap not, while my life goes bare
And void in wintry air.

I hope indeed; but hope itself is fear
Viewed on the sunny side;
I hope, and disregard the world that's here,
The prizes drawn, the sweet things that betide;
I hope, and I abide.

BEFORE 1879.

DE PROFUNDIS°

OH why is heaven built so far,
Oh why is earth set so remote?
I cannot reach the nearest star
That hangs afloat.

I would not care to reach the moon,
One round monotonous of change;
Yet even she repeats her tune
Beyond my range.

I never watch the scattered fire
Of stars, or sun's far-trailing train,
But all my heart is one desire,
And all in vain:

For I am bound with fleshly bands,
Joy, beauty, lie beyond my scope;
I strain my heart, I stretch my hands,
And catch at hope.

1879.

THE MONTHS: A PAGEANT

PERSONIFICATIONS

Boys	*Girls*
JANUARY	FEBRUARY
MARCH	APRIL
JULY	MAY
AUGUST	JUNE
OCTOBER	SEPTEMBER
DECEMBER	NOVEMBER

ROBIN REDBREASTS; LAMBS AND SHEEP; NIGHTINGALE AND NESTLINGS

Various Flowers, Fruits, etc.

Scene: A COTTAGE WITH ITS GROUNDS

[A room in a large comfortable cottage; a fire burning on the hearth; a table on which the breakfast things have been left standing. January discovered seated by the fire.]

JANUARY

COLD the day and cold the drifted snow,
Dim the day until the cold dark night.
[Stirs the fire.
Crackle, sparkle, faggot; embers glow:
Some one may be plodding through the snow
Longing for a light,
For the light that you and I can show.
If no one else should come,
Here Robin Redbreast's welcome to a crumb,
And never troublesome:
Robin, why don't you come and fetch your crumb?

Here's butter for my hunch of bread,
And sugar for your crumb;
Here's room upon the hearthrug,
If you'll only come.

In your scarlet waistcoat,
With your keen bright eye,
Where are you loitering?
Wings were made to fly!

Make haste to breakfast,
Come and fetch your crumb,
For I'm as glad to see you
As you are glad to come.

[Two Robin Redbreasts are seen tapping with their beaks at the lattice, which January opens. The birds flutter in, hop about the floor, and peck up the crumbs and sugar thrown to them. They have scarcely finished their meal when a knock is heard at the door. January hangs a guard in front of the fire, and opens to February, who appears with a bunch of snowdrops in her hand.]

Good-morrow, sister.

FEBRUARY

Brother, joy to you!
I've brought some snowdrops; only just a few,
But quite enough to prove the world awake,
Cheerful and hopeful in the frosty dew
And for the pale sun's sake.

[She hands a few of her snowdrops to January, who retires into the background. While February stands arranging the remaining snowdrops in a glass of water on the window-sill, a soft butting and bleating are heard outside. She opens the door, and sees one foremost lamb, with other sheep and lambs bleating and crowding towards her.]

O you, you little wonder, come — come in,
You wonderful, you woolly soft white lamb:
You panting mother ewe, come too,
And lead that tottering twin
Safe in:

Bring all your bleating kith and kin,
Except the horny ram

[February opens a second door in the background, and the little flock files through into a warm and sheltered compartment out of sight.]

The lambkin tottering in its walk
With just a fleece to wear ;
The snowdrop drooping on its stalk
So slender, —
Snowdrop and lamb, a pretty pair,
Braving the cold for our delight,
Both white,
Both tender.

[A rattling of doors and windows; branches seen without, tossing violently to and fro.]

How the doors rattle, and the branches sway !
Here's brother March comes whirling on his way
With winds that eddy and sing : —

[She turns the handle of the door, which bursts open, and discloses March hastening up, both hands full of violets and anemones.]

Come, show me what you bring ;
For I have said my say, fulfilled my day,
And must away.

MARCH

[Stopping short on the threshold.]

I blow an arouse
Through the world's wide house
To quicken the torpid earth :
Grappling I fling

Each feeble thing,
But bring strong life to the birth.
I wrestle and frown,
And topple down;
I wrench, I rend, I uproot;
Yet the violet
Is born where I set
The sole of my flying foot,

[Hands violets and anemones to February, who retires into the background.]

And in my wake
Frail wind-flowers quake,
And the catkins promise fruit.
I drive ocean ashore
With rush and roar,
And he cannot say me nay:
My harpstrings all
Are the forests tall,
Making music when I play.
And as others perforce,
So I on my course
Run and needs must run,
With sap on the mount
And buds past count
And rivers and clouds and sun,
With seasons and breath
And time and death
And all that has yet begun.

Before March has done speaking, a voice is heard approaching accompanied by a twittering of birds. April comes along singing, and stands outside and out of sight to finish her song.]

April

[Outside.]

Pretty little three
Sparrows in a tree,
  Light upon the wing;
  Though you cannot sing
  You can chirp of Spring:
Chirp of Spring to me,
Sparrows, from your tree.

Never mind the showers,
Chirp about the flowers
  While you build a nest:
  Straws from east and west,
  Feathers from your breast,
Make the snuggest bowers
In a world of flowers.

You must dart away
From the chosen spray,
  You intrusive third
  Extra little bird;
  Join the unwedded herd!
These have done with play,
And must work to-day.

[Appearing at the open door.]

Good-morrow and good-bye: if others fly,
Of all the flying months you're the most flying.

March

You're hope and sweetness, April.

APRIL

Birth means dying,
As wings and wind mean flying;
So you and I and all things fly or die;
And sometimes I sit sighing to think of dying.
But meanwhile I've a rainbow in my showers,
And a lapful of flowers,
And these dear nestlings aged three hours;
And here's their mother sitting;
Their father's merely flitting
To find their breakfast somewhere in my bowers.

[As she speaks April shows March her apron full of flowers and nest full of birds. March wanders away into the grounds. April, without entering the cottage, hangs over the hungry nestlings watching them.]

What beaks you have, you funny things,
What voices shrill and weak;
Who'd think that anything that sings
Could sing through such a beak?
Yet you'll be nightingales one day,
And charm the country side,
When I'm away and far away
And May is queen and bride.

[May arrives unperceived by April, and gives her a kiss. April starts and looks round.]

Ah May, good-morrow, May, and so good-bye.

MAY

That's just your way, sweet April, smile and sigh:
Your sorrow's half in fun,
Begun and done
And turned to joy while twenty seconds run.

I've gathered flowers all as I came along,
At every step a flower
Fed by your last bright shower, —

[She divides an armful of all sorts of flowers with April, who strolls away through the garden.]

And gathering flowers I listened to the song
Of every bird in bower.

The world and I are far too full of bliss
To think or plan or toil or care;
The sun is waxing strong,
The days are waxing long,
And all that is
Is fair.

Here are my buds of lily and of rose,
And here's my namesake blossom may;
And from a watery spot
See here forget-me-not,
With all that blows
To-day.

Hark to my linnets from the hedges green,
Blackbird and lark and thrush and dove,
And every nightingale
And cuckoo tells its tale,
And all they mean
Is love.

[June appears at the further end of the garden, coming slowly towards May, who, seeing her, exclaims]

Surely you're come too early, sister June.

JUNE

Indeed I feel as if I came too soon
To round your young May moon
And set the world a-gasping at my noon.
Yet come I must. So here are strawberries
Sun-flushed and sweet, as many as you please;
And here are full-blown roses by the score,
More roses, and yet more.

[May, eating strawberries, withdraws among the flower beds.]

The sun does all my long day's work for me,
Raises and ripens everything;
I need but sit beneath a leafy tree
And watch and sing.

[Seats herself in the shadow of a laburnum.]

Or if I'm lulled by note of bird and bee,
Or lulled by noontide's silence deep,
I need but nestle down beneath my tree
And drop asleep.

[June falls asleep; and is not awakened by the voice of July, who behind the scenes is heard half singing, half calling.]

JULY

[Behind the scenes.]

Blue flags, yellow flags, flags all freckled,
Which will you take? yellow, blue, speckled!

Take which you will, speckled, blue, yellow,
Each in its way has not a fellow.

[Enter July, a basket of many-coloured irises slung upon his shoulders, a bunch of ripe grass in one hand, and a plate piled full of peaches balanced upon the other. He steals up to June, and tickles her with the grass. She wakes.]

JUNE

What, here already?

JULY

Nay, my tryst is kept;
The longest day slipped by you while you slept.
I've brought you one curved pyramid of bloom,

[Hands her the plate.]

Not flowers but peaches, gathered where the bees,
As downy, bask and boom
In sunshine and in gloom of trees.
But get you in, a storm is at my heels;
The whirlwind whistles and wheels,
Lightning flashes and thunder peals,
Flying and following hard upon my heels.

[June takes shelter in a thickly-woven arbour.]

The roar of a storm sweeps up
From the east to the lurid west,
The darkening sky, like a cup,
Is filled with rain to the brink;
The sky is purple and fire,
Blackness and noise and unrest;
The earth, parched with desire,
Opens her mouth to drink.

Send forth thy thunder and fire,
Turn over thy brimming cup,
O sky, appease the desire
Of earth in her parched unrest;

Pour out drink to her thirst,
  Her famishing life lift up;
Make thyself fair as at first,
  With a rainbow for thy crest.

Have done with thunder and fire,
  O sky with the rainbow crest;
O earth, have done with desire,
  Drink, and drink deep, and rest.

[Enter August, carrying a sheaf made up of different kinds of grain.]

Hail, brother August, flushed and warm
And scatheless from my storm.
Your hands are full of corn, I see,
As full as hands can be:
And earth and air both smell as sweet as balm
In their recovered calm,
And that they owe to me.

[July retires into a shrubbery.]

AUGUST

Wheat sways heavy, oats are airy,
  Barley bows a graceful head,
Short and small shoots up canary,
  Each of these is some one's bread;
Bread for man or bread for beast,
    Or at very least
    A bird's savoury feast.

Men are brethren of each other,
  One in flesh and one in food;
And a sort of foster-brother
  Is the litter or the brood

Of that folk in fur or feather
Who, with men together,
Breast the wind and weather.

[August descries September toiling across the lawn.]

My harvest home is ended; and I spy
September drawing nigh
With the first thought of Autumn in her eye,
And the first sigh
Of Autumn wind among her locks that fly.

[September arrives, carrying upon her head a basket heaped high with fruit.]

SEPTEMBER

Unload me, brother. I have brought a few
Plums and these pears for you,
A dozen kinds of apples, one or two
Melons, some figs all bursting through
Their skins, and pearled with dew
These damsons violet-blue.

[While September is speaking, August lifts the basket to the ground, selects various fruits, and withdraws slowly along the gravel walk, eating a pear as he goes.]

My song is half a sigh
Because my green leaves die;
Sweet are my fruits, but all my leaves are dying;
And well may Autumn sigh,
And well may I
Who watch the sere leaves flying.

My leaves that fade and fall,
I note you one and all;
I call you, and the Autumn wind is calling,
Lamenting for your fall,
And for the pall
You spread on earth in falling.

And here's a song of flowers to suit such hours:
A song of the last lilies, the last flowers,
Amid my withering bowers.

In the sunny garden bed
Lilies look so pale,
Lilies droop the head
In the shady grassy vale;
If all alike they pine
In shade and in shine,
If everywhere they grieve,
Where will lilies live?

October enters briskly, some leafy twigs bearing different sorts of nuts in one hand, and a long ripe hop-bine trailing after him from the other. A dahlia is stuck in his buttonhole.]

OCTOBER

Nay, cheer up sister. Life is not quite over,
Even if the year has done with corn and clover,
With flowers and leaves; besides, in fact it's true,
Some leaves remain and some flowers too
For me and you.
Now see my crops:

[Offering his produce to September.]

I've brought you nuts and hops;
And when the leaf drops, why, the walnut drops.

October wreathes the hop-bine about September's neck, and gives her the nut twigs. They enter the cottage together, but without shutting the door. She steps into the background: he advances to the hearth, removes the guard, stirs up the smouldering fire, and arranges several chestnuts ready to roast.]

Crack your first nut and light your first fire,
  Roast your first chestnut crisp on the bar;
Make the logs sparkle, stir the blaze higher,
  Logs are cheery as sun or as star,
  Logs we can find wherever we are.

Spring one soft day will open the leaves,
  Spring one bright day will lure back the flowers;
Never fancy my whistling wind grieves,
  Never fancy I've tears in my showers:
  Dance, nights and days! and dance on, my hours!

[Sees November approaching.]

Here comes my youngest sister, looking dim
And grim,
With dismal ways.
What cheer, November?

NOVEMBER

[Entering and shutting the door.]

Nought have I to bring,
Tramping a-chill and shivering,
Except these pine-cones for a blaze, —
Except a fog which follows,
And stuffs up all the hollows, —
Except a hoar frost here and there, —
Except some shooting stars
Which dart their luminous cars
Trackless and noiseless through the keen night air.

[October, shrugging his shoulders, withdraws into the background while November throws her pine-cones on the fire, and sits down listlessly.]

The earth lies fast asleep, grown tired
Of all that's high or deep;
There's nought desired and nought required
Save a sleep.
I rock the cradle of the earth,
I lull her with a sigh;
And know that she will wake to mirth
By and by.

[Through the window December is seen running and leaping in the direction of the door. He knocks.]

Ah, here's my youngest brother come at last:

[Calls out without rising.]

Come in, December.

[He opens the door and enters, loaded with evergreens in berry, etc.]

Come, and shut the door,
For now it's snowing fast;
It snows, and will snow more and more;
Don't let it drift in on the floor.
But you, you're all aglow; how can you be
Rosy and warm and smiling in the cold?

DECEMBER

Nay, no closed doors for me,
But open doors and open hearts and glee
To welcome young and old.

Dimmest and brightest month am I;
My short days end, my lengthening days begin;
What matters more or less sun in the sky,
When all is sun within?

[He begins making a wreath as he sings.]

Ivy and privet dark as night,
I weave with hips and haws a cheerful show,
And holly for a beauty and delight,
And milky mistletoe.

While high above them all I set
Yew twigs and Christmas roses pure and pale;
Then Spring her snowdrop and her violet
May keep, so sweet and frail;

May keep each merry singing bird,
Of all her happy birds that singing build:
For I've a carol which some shepherds heard
Once in a wintry field.

[While December concludes his song all the other Months troop in from the garden, or advance out of the background. The Twelve join hands in a circle, and begin dancing round to a stately measure as the Curtain falls.]

SUMMER, 1879.

MONNA INNOMINATA

A SONNET OF SONNETS

BEATRICE, immortalized by "altissimo poeta . . . cotanto amante" Laura, celebrated by a great though an inferior bard, — have alike paid the exceptional penalty of exceptional honour, and have come down to us resplendent with charms, but (at least, to my apprehension) scant of attractiveness.

These heroines of world-wide fame were preceded by a bevy of unnamed ladies, "donne innominate," sung by a school of less conspicuous poets; and in that land and that period which gave simultaneous birth to Catholics, to Albigenses, and to Troubadours, one can imagine many a lady as sharing her lover's poetic aptitude, while the barrier between them might be one held sacred by both, yet not such as to render mutual love incompatible with mutual honour.

Had such a lady spoken for herself, the portrait left us might have appeared more tender, if less dignified, than any drawn even by devoted friend. Or had the Great Poetess of our own day and nation

only been unhappy instead of happy, her circumstances would have invited her to bequeath to us, in lieu of the "Portuguese Sonnets," an inimitable "donna innominata" drawn not from fancy but from feeling, and worthy to occupy a niche beside Beatrice and Laura.

1

"Lo dì che han detto a' dolci amici addio." DANTE.
"Amor, con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci!" PETRARCA.

COME back to me, who wait and watch for you: —
Or come not yet, for it is over then,
And long it is before you come again,
So far between my pleasures are and few.
While, when you come not, what I do I do
Thinking "Now when he comes," my sweetest "when":
For one man is my world of all the men
This wide world holds; O love, my world is you.
Howbeit, to meet you grows almost a pang
Because the pang of parting comes so soon;
My hope hangs waning, waxing, like a moon
Between the heavenly days on which we meet:
Ah me, but where are now the songs I sang
When life was sweet because you called them sweet?

2

"Era già l'ora che volge il desio." DANTE.
"Ricorro al tempo ch' io vi vidi prima." PETRARCA.

I wish I could remember that first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;
So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and to foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.

If only I could recollect it, such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow;
It seemed to mean so little, meant so much;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand — Did one but know!

3

"O ombre vane, fuor che ne l'aspetto!" DANTE.
"Immaginata guida la conduce." PETRARCA.

I dream of you, to wake: would that I might
Dream of you and not wake but slumber on;
Nor find with dreams the dear companion gone,
As, Summer ended, Summer birds take flight.
In happy dreams I hold you full in sight,
I blush again who waking look so wan;
Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone,
In happy dreams your smile makes day of night.
Thus only in a dream we are at one,
Thus only in a dream we give and take
The faith that maketh rich who take or give;
If thus to sleep is sweeter than to wake,
To die were surely sweeter than to live,
Though there be nothing new beneath the sun.

4

"Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda." DANTE.
"Ogni altra cosa, ogni pensier va fore,
E sol ivi con voi rimansi armore." PETRARCA.

I loved you first: but afterwards your love,
Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song

As drowned the friendly cooings of my dove.
Which owes the other most? My love was long,
And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong;
I loved and guessed at you, you construed me
And loved me for what might or might not be —
Nay, weights and measures do us both a wrong.
For verily love knows not "mine" or "thine";
With separate "I" and "thou" free love has done,
For one is both and both are one in love:
Rich love knows nought of "thine that is not mine;"
Both have the strength and both the length thereof,
Both of us, of the love which makes us one.

5

"Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona." DANTE.
"Amor m'addusse in sì gioiosa spene." PETRARCA.

O my heart's heart, and you who are to me
More than myself myself, God be with you,
Keep you in strong obedience leal and true
To Him whose noble service setteth free;
Give you all good we see or can foresee,
Make your joys many and your sorrows few,
Bless you in what you bear and what you do,
Yea, perfect you as He would have you be.
So much for you; but what for me, dear friend?
To love you without stint and all I can,
To-day, to-morrow, world without an end;
To love you much and yet to love you more,
As Jordan at his flood sweeps either shore;
Since woman is the helpmeet made for man.°

6

"Or puoi la quantitate
Comprender de l'amor che a te mi scalda." DANTE.
"Non vo' che da tal nodo amor mi scioglia." PETRARCA.

Trust me, I have not earned your dear rebuke, —
I love, as you would have me, God the most;
Would lose not Him, but you, must one be lost,°
Nor with Lot's wife cast back a faithless look,
Unready to forego what I forsook;
This say I, having counted up the cost,
This, though I be the feeblest of God's host,
The sorriest sheep Christ shepherds with His crook.
Yet while I love my God the most, I deem
That I can never love you overmuch;
I love Him more, so let me love you too;
Yea, as I apprehend it, love is such
I cannot love you if I love not Him,
I cannot love Him if I love not you.

7

"Qui primavera sempre ed ogni frutto." DANTE.
"Ragionando con meco ed io con lui." PETRARCA.

"Love me, for I love you" — and answer me,
"Love me, for I love you": so shall we stand
As happy equals in the flowering land
Of love, that knows not a dividing sea.
Love builds the house on rock and not on sand,
Love laughs what while the winds rave desperately;
And who hath found love's citadel unmanned?
And who hath held in bonds love's liberty? —
My heart's a coward though my words are brave —
We meet so seldom, yet we surely part
So often; there's a problem for your art!
Still I find comfort in his Book who saith,
Though jealousy be cruel as the grave,
And death be strong, yet love is strong as death.

8

"Come dicesse a Dio, D'altro non calme." DANTE.
"Spero trovar pietà non che perdono." PETRARCA.

"I, if I perish, perish" — Esther spake:
And bride of life or death she made her fair
In all the lustre of her perfumed hair
And smiles that kindle longing but to slake.
She put on pomp of loveliness, to take
Her husband through his eyes at unaware;
She spread abroad her beauty for a snare,
Harmless as doves and subtle as a snake.
She trapped him with one mesh of silken hair,
She vanquished him by wisdom of her wit,
And built her people's house that it should stand: —
If I might take my life so in my hand,
And for my love to Love put up my prayer,
And for love's sake by Love be granted it!

9

"O dignitosa coscienza e netta!" DANTE.
"Spirto più acceso di virtuti ardenti." PETRARCA.

Thinking of you, and all that was, and all
That might have been and now can never be,
I feel your honoured excellence, and see
Myself unworthy of the happier call:
For woe is me who walk so apt to fall,
So apt to shrink afraid, so apt to flee,
Apt to lie down and die (ah woe is me!)
Faithless and hopeless turning to the wall.
And yet not hopeless quite nor faithless quite,
Because not loveless; love may toil all night,
But take at morning; wrestle till the break
Of day, but then wield power with God and man: —
So take I heart of grace as best I can,
Ready to spend and be spent for your sake.

10

"Con miglior corso e con migliore stella." DANTE.
"La vita fugge e non s'arresta un' ora." PETRARCA.

Time flies, hope flags, life plies a wearied wing;
Death following hard on life gains ground apace;
Faith runs with each and rears an eager face,
Outruns the rest, makes light of everything,
Spurns earth, and still finds breath to pray and sing;
While love ahead of all uplifts his praise,
Still asks for grace and still gives thanks for grace,
Content with all day brings and night will bring.
Life wanes; and when love folds his wings above
Tired hope, and less we feel his conscious pulse,
Let us go fall asleep, dear friend, in peace:
A little while, and age and sorrow cease;
A little while, and life reborn annuls
Loss and decay and death, and all is love.

11

"Vien dietro a me e lascia dir le genti." DANTE.
"Contando i casi della vita nostra." PETRARCA.

Many in aftertimes will say of you
"He loved her" — while of me what will they say?
Not that I loved you more than just in play,
For fashion's sake as idle women do.
Even let them prate; who know not what we knew
Of love and parting in exceeding pain,
Of parting hopeless here to meet again,
Hopeless on earth, and heaven is out of view.
But by my heart of love laid bare to you,
My love that you can make not void nor vain,
Love that foregoes you but to claim anew
Beyond this passage of the gate of death,
I charge you at the judgment make it plain
My love of you was life and not a breath.

12

"Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona." DANTE.
"Amor vien nel bel viso di costei." PETRARCA.

If there be any one can take my place°
And make you happy whom I grieve to grieve,
Think not that I can grudge it, but believe
I do commend you to that nobler grace,
That readier wit than mine, that sweeter face;
Yea, since your riches make me rich, conceive
I too am crowned, while bridal crowns I weave,
And thread the bridal dance with jocund pace.
For if I did not love you, it might be
That I should grudge you some one dear delight;
But since the heart is yours that was mine own,
Your pleasure is my pleasure, right my right,
Your honourable freedom makes me free,
And you companioned I am not alone.

13

"E drizzeremo gli occhi al Primo Amore." DANTE.
"Ma trovo peso non da le mie braccia." PETRARCA.

If I could trust mine own self with your fate,
Shall I not rather trust it in God's hand?
Without Whose Will one lily doth not stand,
Nor sparrow fall at his appointed date;
Who numbereth the innumerable sand,
Who weighs the wind and water with a weight,
To Whom the world is neither small nor great,
Whose knowledge foreknew every plan we planned.
Searching my heart for all that touches you,
I find there only love and love's goodwill
Helpless to help and impotent to do,
Of understanding dull, of sight most dim;
And therefore I commend you back to Him
Whose love your love's capacity can fill.

14

"E la Sua Volontade è nostra pace." DANTE.
"Sol con questi pensier, con altre chiome." PETRARCA.

Youth gone, and beauty gone if ever there
Dwelt beauty in so poor a face as this;
Youth gone and beauty, what remains of bliss?
I will not bind fresh roses in my hair,
To shame a cheek at best but little fair, —
Leave youth his roses, who can bear a thorn, —
I will not seek for blossoms anywhere,
Except such common flowers as blow with corn.
Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?
The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,
A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;
The silence of a heart which sang its songs
While youth and beauty made a summer morn,
Silence of love that cannot sing again.

BEFORE 1882.

AN OLD-WORLD THICKET°

"Una selva oscura." DANTE.

AWAKE or sleeping (for I know not which)
I was or was not mazed within a wood
Where every mother-bird brought up her brood
Safe in some leafy niche
Of oak or ash, of cypress or of beech,

Of silvery aspen trembling delicately,
Of plane or warmer-tinted sycamore,
Of elm that dies in secret from the core,
Of ivy weak and free,
Of pines, of all green lofty things that be.

Such birds they seemed as challenged each desire;
Like spots of azure heaven upon the wing,
Like downy emeralds that alight and sing,
Like actual coals on fire,
Like anything they seemed, and everything.

Such mirth they made, such warblings and such chat,
With tongue of music in a well-tuned beak,
They seemed to speak more wisdom than we speak,
To make our music flat
And all our subtlest reasonings wild or weak.

Their meat was nought but flowers like butterflies,
With berries coral-coloured or like gold;
Their drink was only dew, which blossoms hold
Deep where the honey lies;
Their wings and tails were lit by sparkling eyes.

The shade wherein they revelled was a shade
That danced and twinkled to the unseen sun;
Branches and leaves cast shadows one by one,
And all their shadows swayed
In breaths of air that rustled and that played.

A sound of waters neither rose nor sank,
And spread a sense of freshness through the air;
It seemed not here or there, but everywhere,
As if the whole earth drank,
Root fathom-deep and strawberry on its bank.

But I who saw such things as I have said
Was overdone with utter weariness;
And walked in care, as one whom fears oppress,
Because above his head
Death hangs, or damage, or the dearth of bread.

Each sore defeat of my defeated life
  Faced and outfaced me in that bitter hour;
  And turned to yearning palsy all my power,
    And all my peace to strife,
Self stabbing self with keen lack-pity knife.

Sweetness of beauty moved me to despair,
  Stung me to anger by its mere content,
  Made me all lonely on that way I went,
    Piled care upon my care,
Brimmed full my cup, and stripped me empty and bare:

For all that was but showed what all was not,
  But gave clear proof of what might never be;
  Making more destitute my poverty,
    And yet more blank my lot,
  And me much sadder by its jubilee.

Therefore I sat me down: for wherefore walk?
  And closed mine eyes: for wherefore see or hear?
  Alas, I had no shutter to mine ear,
    And could not shun the talk
  Of all rejoicing creatures far or near.

Without my will I hearkened and I heard
  (Asleep or waking, for I know not which),
  Till note by note the music changed its pitch;
    Bird ceased to answer bird,
And every wing sighed softly if it stirred.

The drip of widening waters seemed to weep,
  All fountains sobbed and gurgled as they sprang,
Somewhere a cataract cried out in its leap
    Sheer down a headlong steep;
  High over all cloud-thunders gave a clang.

Such universal sound of lamentation
I heard and felt, fain not to feel or hear;
Nought else there seemed but anguish far and near;
Nought else but all creation
Moaning and groaning wrung by pain or fear,

Shuddering in the misery of its doom:
My heart then rose a rebel against light,
Scouring all earth and heaven and depth and height,
Ingathering wrath and gloom,
Ingathering wrath to wrath and night to night.

Ah me, the bitterness of such revolt,
All impotent, all hateful, and all hate,
That kicks and breaks itself against the bolt
Of an imprisoning fate,
And vainly shakes, and cannot shake the gate.

Agony to agony, deep called to deep,
Out of the deep I called of my desire;
My strength was weakness and my heart was fire;
Mine eyes, that would not weep
Or sleep, scaled height and depth, and could not sleep;

The eyes, I mean, of my rebellious soul,
For still my bodily eyes were closed and dark:
A random thing I seemed without a mark,
Racing without a goal,
Adrift upon life's sea without an ark.

More leaden than the actual self of lead
Outer and inner darkness weighed on me.
The tide of anger ebbed. Then fierce and free
Surged full above my head
The moaning tide of helpless misery.

Why should I breathe, whose breath was but a sigh?
  Why should I live, who drew such painful breath?
Oh weary work, the unanswerable why! —
    Yet I, why should I die,
  Who had no hope in life, no hope in death?

Grasses and mosses and the fallen leaf
  Make peaceful bed for an indefinite term;
  But underneath the grass there gnaws a worm —
    Haply, there gnaws a grief —
Both, haply always; not, as now, so brief.

The pleasure I remember, it is past;
  The pain I feel is passing passing by;
  Thus all the world is passing, and thus I:
    All things that cannot last
  Have grown familiar, and are born to die.

And being familiar, have so long been borne
  That habit trains us not to break but bend:
Mourning grows natural to us who mourn
    In foresight of an end,
  But that which ends not who shall brave or mend?

Surely the ripe fruits tremble on their bough,
  They cling and linger trembling till they drop:
I, trembling, cling to dying life; for how
    Face the perpetual Now?
  Birthless and deathless, void of start or stop,

Void of repentance, void of hope and fear,
  Of possibility, alternative,
  Of all that ever made us bear to live
    From night to morning here,
  Of promise even which has no gift to give.

The wood, and every creature of the wood,
Seemed mourning with me in an undertone;
Soft scattered chirpings and a windy moan,
Trees rustling, where they stood
And shivered, showed compassion for my mood.

Rage to despair; and now despair had turned
Back to self-pity and mere weariness,
With yearnings like a smouldering fire that burned,
And might grow more or less,
And might die out or wax to white excess.

Without, within me, music seemed to be;
Something not music, yet most musical,
Silence and sound in heavenly harmony;
At length a pattering fall
Of feet, a bell, and bleatings, broke through all.

Then I looked up. The wood lay in a glow
From golden sunset and from ruddy sky;
The sun had stooped to earth though once so high;
Had stooped to earth, in slow
Warm dying loveliness brought near and low.

Each water drop made answer to the light,
Lit up a spark and showed the sun his face;
Soft purple shadows paved the grassy space
And crept from height to height.
From height to loftier height crept up apace.

While opposite the sun a gazing moon
Put on his glory for her coronet,
Kindling her luminous coldness to its moon,
As his great splendor set;
One only star made up her train as yet.

Each twig was tipped with gold, each leaf was edged
And veined with gold from the gold-flooded west;
Each mother-bird, and mate-bird, and unfledged
Nestling, and curious nest,
Displayed a gilded moss or beak or breast.

And filing peacefully between the trees,
Having the moon behind them, and the sun
Full in their meek mild faces, walked at ease
A homeward flock, at peace
With one another and with every one.

A patriarchal ram with tinkling bell
Led all his kin; sometimes one browsing sheep
Hung back a moment, or one lamb would leap
And frolic in a dell;
Yet still they kept together, journeying well,

And bleating, one or other, many or few,
Journeying together toward the sunlit west;
Mild face by face, and woolly breast by breast,
Patient, sun-brightened too,
Still journeying toward the sunset and their rest.

Before 1882.

MAIDEN MAY°

Maiden May sat in her bower,
In her blush-rose bower in flower,
Sweet of scent;
Sat and dreamed away an hour,
Half content, half uncontent.

"Why should rose blossoms be born,
Tender blossoms, on a thorn,
Though so sweet?
Never a thorn besets the corn,
Scentless, in its strength complete.

"Why are roses all so frail,
At the mercy of a gale,
Of a breath?
Yet so sweet and perfect pale,
Still so sweet in life and death."

Maiden May sat in her bower,
In her blush-rose bower in flower,
Where a linnet
Made one bristling branch the tower
For her nest and young ones in it.

"Gay and clear the linnet trills;
Yet the skylark, only, thrills
Heaven and earth,
When he breasts the height, and fills
Height and depth with song and mirth.

"Nightingales which yield to night
Solitary strange delight
Reign alone:
But the lark for all his height
Fills no solitary throne.

"While he sings, a hundred sing;
Wing their flight, below his wing,
Yet in flight;
Each a lovely joyful thing
To the measure of its delight.

"Why then should a lark be reckoned
One alone, without a second
Near his throne?
He in skyward flight unslackened,
In his music, not alone."

Maiden May sat in her bower;
Her own face was like a flower
Of the prime,
Half in sunshine, half in shower,
In the year's most tender time.

Her own thoughts in silent song
Musically flowed along,
Wise, unwise,
Wistful, wondering, weak or strong:
As brook shallows sink or rise.

Other thoughts another day,
Maiden May, will surge and sway
Round your heart;
Wake, and plead, and turn at bay,
Wisdom part, and folly part.

Time not far remote will borrow
Other joys, another sorrow,
All for you;
Not to-day, and yet to-morrow
Reasoning false and reasoning true.

Wherefore greatest? Wherefore least?
Hearts that starve and hearts that feast?
You and I?
Stammering Oracles have ceased,
And the whole earth stands at "why?"

Underneath all things that be
Lies an unsolved mystery;
Over all
Spreads a veil impenetrably,
Spreads a dense unlifted pall.

Mystery of mysteries;
This creation hears and sees
High and low:
Vanity of vanities;
This we test and *this* we know.

Maiden May, the days of flowering
Nurse you now in sweet embowering,
Sunny days;
Bright with rainbows all the showering,
Bright with blossoms all the ways.

Close the inlet of your bower,
Close it close with thorn and flower,
Maiden May;
Lengthen out the shortening hour, —
Morrows are not as to-day.

Stay to-day which wanes too soon,
Stay the sun and stay the moon,
Stay your youth;
Bask you in the actual noon,
Rest you in the present truth.

Let to-day suffice to-day:
For itself to-morrow may
Fetch its loss,
Aim and stumble, say its say,
Watch and pray and bear its cross.

BEFORE 1882.

LATER LIFE: A DOUBLE SONNET OF SONNETS°

1

Before the mountains were brought forth, before
  Earth and the world were made, then God was God:
And God will still be God when flames shall roar
  Round earth and heaven dissolving at His nod:
  And this God is our God, even while His rod
Of righteous wrath falls on us smiting sore:
And this God is our God for evermore,
  Through life, through death, while clod returns to clod.
For though He slay us we will trust in Him;
  We will flock home to Him by divers ways:
  Yea, though He slay us we will vaunt His praise,
Serving and loving with the Cherubim,
Watching and loving with the Seraphim,
  Our very selves His praise through endless days.

2

Rend hearts and rend not garments for our sins;
  Gird sackcloth not on body but on soul;
  Grovel in dust with faces toward the goal
Nor won nor neared: he only laughs who wins.
Not neared the goal, the race too late begins;
  All left undone, we have yet to do the whole;
  The sun is hurrying west and toward the pole
Where darkness waits for earth with all her kins.
Let us to-day while it is called to-day
  Set out, if utmost speed may yet avail —
  The shadows lengthen and the light grows pale:
  For who through darkness and the shadow of death,
Darkness that may be felt, shall find a way,
  Blind-eyed, deaf-eared, and choked with failing breath?

3

Thou Who didst make and knowest whereof we are made,
  Oh bear in mind our dust and nothingness,
  Our wordless tearless numbness of distress:
Bear Thou in mind the burden Thou hast laid
Upon us, and our feebleness unstayed
  Except Thou stay us: for the long long race
  Which stretches far and far before our face
Thou knowest, — remember Thou whereof we are made.
If making makes us Thine then Thine we are,
  And if redemption we are twice Thine own:
If once Thou didst come down from heaven afar
To seek us and to find us, how not save?
  Comfort us, save us, leave us not alone,
Thou who didst die our death and fill our grave.

4

So tired am I, so weary of to-day,
  So unrefreshed from foregone weariness,
  So overburdened by foreseen distress,
So lagging and so stumbling on my way,
I scarce can rouse myself to watch or pray,
  To hope, or aim, or toil for more or less, —
  Ah always less and less, even while I press
Forward and toil and aim as best I may.
Half-starved of soul and heartsick utterly,
  Yet lift I up my heart and soul and eyes
  (Which fail in looking upward) toward the prize:
Me, Lord, Thou seest though I see not Thee;
  Me now, as once the Thief in Paradise,
Even me, O Lord my Lord, remember me.

5

Lord, Thou Thyself art Love and only Thou ;
  Yet I who am not love would fain love Thee ;
  But Thou alone being Love canst furnish me
With that same love my heart is craving now.
Allow my plea ! for if Thou disallow,
  No second fountain can I find but Thee ;
  No second hope or help is left to me,
No second anything, but only Thou.
O Love, accept, according my request ;
  O Love, exhaust, fulfilling my desire :
  Uphold me with the strength that cannot tire,
Nerve me to labour till Thou bid me rest,
  Kindle my fire from Thine unkindled fire,
And charm the willing heart from out my breast.

6

We lack, yet cannot fix upon the lack :
  Not this, nor that ; yet somewhat, certainly.
  We see the things we do not yearn to see
Around us : and what see we glancing back ?
Lost hopes that leave our hearts upon the rack,
  Hopes that were never ours yet seemed to be,
  For which we steered on life's salt stormy sea
Braving the sunstroke and the frozen pack.
If thus to look behind is all in vain,
  And all in vain to look to left or right,
Why face we not our future once again,
Launching with hardier hearts across the main,
  Straining dim eyes to catch the invisible sight,
And strong to bear ourselves in patient pain ?

7

To love and to remember; that is good:
To love and to forget; that is not well:
To lapse from love to hatred; that is hell
And death and torment, rightly understood.
Soul dazed by love and sorrow, cheer thy mood;
More blest art thou than mortal tongue can tell:
Ring not thy funeral but thy marriage bell,
And salt with hope thy life's insipid food.
Love is the goal, love is the way we wend,
Love is our parallel unending line
Whose only perfect Parallel is Christ,
Beginning not begun, End without end:
For He Who hath the Heart of God sufficed
Can satisfy all hearts, — yea, thine and mine.

8

We feel and see with different hearts and eyes: —
Ah Christ, if all our hearts could meet in Thee,
How well it were for them and well for me,
Our hearts Thy dear accepted sacrifice.
Thou, only Life of hearts and Light of eyes,
Our life, our light, if once we turn to Thee,
So be it, O Lord, to them and so to me;
Be all alike Thine own dear sacrifice.
Thou Who by death hast ransomed us from death,
Thyself God's sole well-pleasing Sacrifice,
Thine only sacred Self I plead with Thee:
Make Thou it well for them and well for me
That Thou hast given us souls and wills and breath,
And hearts to love Thee, and to see Thine eyes.

9

Star Sirius and the Pole Star dwell afar
Beyond the drawings each of other's strength.
One blazes through the brief bright summer's length,
Lavishing life-heat from a flaming car;
While one unchangeable upon a throne
Broods o'er the frozen heart of earth alone,
Content to reign the bright particular star
Of some who wander or of some who groan.
They own no drawings each of other's strength,
Nor vibrate in a visible sympathy,
Nor veer along their courses each toward each:
Yet are their orbits pitched in harmony
Of one dear heaven, across whose depth and length
Mayhap they talk together without speech.

10

Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground.
It may be, could we look with seeing eyes,
This spot we stand on is a Paradise
Where dead have come to life and lost been found,
Where Faith has triumphed, Martyrdom been crowned,
Where fools have foiled the wisdom of the wise;
From this same spot the dust of saints may rise,
And the King's prisoners come to light unbound.
O earth, earth, earth, hear thou thy Maker's Word:
"Thy dead thou shalt give up, nor hide thy slain."
Some who went weeping forth shall come again
Rejoicing from the east or from the west,
As doves fly to their windows, love's own bird
Contented and desirous to the nest.[1]

[1] "Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
Con l'ali aperte e ferme al dolce nido
Volan per l'aer dal voler portate." DANTE.

11

Lifelong our stumbles, lifelong our regret,
  Lifelong our efforts failing and renewed,
  While lifelong is our witness, "God is good,"
Who bore with us till now, bears with us yet,
Who still remembers and will not forget,
  Who gives us light and warmth and daily food;
  And gracious promises half understood,
And glories half unveiled, whereon to set
Our heart of hearts and eyes of our desire;
  Uplifting us to longing and to love,
Luring us upward from this world of mire,
  Urging us to press on and mount above
  Ourselves and all we have had experience of,
Mounting to Him in love's perpetual fire.

12

A dream there is wherein we are fain to scream,
  While struggling with ourselves we cannot speak:
  And much of all our waking life, as weak
And misconceived, eludes us like the dream.
For half life's seemings are not what they seem,
  And vain the laughs we laugh, the shrieks we shriek;
  Yea, all is vain that mars the settled meek
Contented quiet of our daily theme.
When I was young I deemed that sweets are sweet:
  But now I deem some searching bitters are
  Sweeter than sweets, and more refreshing far,
  And to be relished more, and more desired,
And more to be pursued on eager feet,
  On feet untired, and still on feet though tired.

13

Shame is a shadow cast by sin: yet shame
  Itself may be a glory and a grace,
  Refashioning the sin-disfashioned face;
A nobler bruit than hollow-sounded fame,
A new-lit lustre on a tarnished name,
  One virtue pent within an evil place,
  Strength for the fight, and swiftness for the race,
A stinging salve, a life-requickening flame.
A salve so searching we may scarcely live,
  A flame so fierce it seems that we must die,
    An actual cautery thrust into the heart:
    Nevertheless, men die not of such smart;
And shame gives back what nothing else can give,
  Man to himself, — then sets him up on high.

14

When Adam and when Eve left Paradise,
  Did they love on and cling together still,
  Forgiving one another all that ill
The twain had wrought on such a different wise?
She propped upon his strength, and he in guise
  Of lover though of lord, girt to fulfil
  Their term of life and die when God should will;
Lie down and sleep, and having slept arise.
Boast not against us, O our enemy!
  To-day we fall, but we shall rise again;
We grope to-day, to-morrow we shall see:
What is to-day that we should fear to-day?
A morrow cometh which shall sweep away
  Thee and thy realm of change and death and pain.

15

Let woman fear to teach and bear to learn,
  Remembering the first woman's first mistake.
  Eve had for pupil the inquiring snake,
Whose doubts she answered on a great concern;
But he the tables so contrived to turn,
  It next was his to give and hers to take;
  Till man deemed poison sweet for her sweet sake,
And fired a train by which the world must burn.
Did Adam love his Eve from first to last?
  I think so; as we love who works us ill,
  And wounds us to the quick, yet loves us still.
Love pardons the unpardonable past:
Love in a dominant embrace holds fast
  His frailer self, and saves without her will.

16

Our teachers teach that one and one make two:
  Later, Love rules that one and one make one:
  Abstruse the problems! neither need we shun,
But skilfully to each should yield its due.
The narrower total seems to suit the few,
  The wider total suits the common run;
  Each obvious in its sphere like moon or sun;
Both provable by me, and both by you.
Befogged and witless, in a wordy maze
  A groping stroll perhaps may do us good;
  If cloyed we are with much we have understood,
If tired of half our dusty world and ways,
  If sick of fasting, and if sick of food;—
And how about these long still-lengthening days?

17

Something this foggy day, a something which
  Is neither of this fog nor of to-day,
  Has set me dreaming of the winds that play
Past certain cliffs, along one certain beach,
  And turn the topmost edge of waves to spray :
  Ah pleasant pebbly strand so far away,
So out of reach while quite within my reach,
  As out of reach as India or Cathay !
I am sick of where I am and where I am not,
  I am sick of foresight and of memory,
  I am sick of all I have and all I see,
  I am sick of self, and there is nothing new ;
Oh weary impatient patience of my lot ! —
  Thus with myself : how fares it, Friends, with you ?

18

So late in Autumn half the world's asleep,
  And half the wakeful world looks pinched and pale ;
  For dampness now, not freshness, rides the gale ;
And cold and colourless comes ashore the deep
With tides that bluster or with tides that creep ;
  Now veiled uncouthness wears an uncouth veil
  Of fog, not sultry haze ; and blight and bale
Have done their worst, and leaves rot on the heap.
So late in Autumn one forgets the Spring,
  Forgets the Summer with its opulence,
The callow birds that long have found a wing,
  The swallows that more lately gat them hence :
Will anything like Spring, will anything
  Like Summer, rouse one day the slumbering sense ?

19

Here now is Winter. Winter, after all,
  Is not so drear as was my boding dream
  While Autumn gleamed its latest watery gleam
On sapless leafage too inert to fall.
Still leaves and berries clothe my garden wall
  Where ivy thrives on scantiest sunny beam;
  Still here a bud and there a blossom seem
Hopeful, and robin still is musical.
Leaves, flowers, and fruit, and one delightful song,
  Remain; these days are short, but now the nights,
  Intense and long, hang out their utmost lights;
Such starry nights are long, yet not too long;
Frost nips the weak, while strengthening still the strong
  Against that day when Spring sets all to rights.

20

A hundred thousand birds salute the day: —
  One solitary bird salutes the night:
Its mellow grieving wiles our grief away,
  And tunes our weary watches to delight;
It seems to sing the thoughts we cannot say,
  To know and sing them, and to set them right;
Until we feel once more that May is May,
  And hope some buds may bloom without a blight.
This solitary bird outweighs, outvies,
  The hundred thousand merry-making birds;
Whose innocent warblings yet might make us wise,
Would we but follow when they bid us rise,
  Would we but set their notes of praise to words
And launch our hearts up with them to the skies.

21

A host of things I take on trust: I take
  The nightingales on trust, for few and far
  Between those actual summer moments are
When I have heard what melody they make.
So chanced it once at Como on the Lake:
  But all things, then, waxed musical; each star
  Sang on its course, each breeze sang on its car,
All harmonies sang to senses wide awake.
All things in tune, myself not out of tune,
  Those nightingales were nightingales indeed:
  Yet truly an owl had satisfied my need,
And wrought a rapture underneath that moon,
  Or simple sparrow chirping from a reed;
For June that night glowed like a doubled June.

22

The mountains in their overwhelming might
  Moved me to sadness when I saw them first,
And afterwards they moved me to delight;
  Struck harmonies from silent chords which burst
  Out into song, a song by memory nursed;
For ever unrenewed by touch or sight
Sleeps the keen magic of each day or night,
  In pleasure and in wonder then immersed.
All Switzerland behind us on the ascent,
  All Italy before us, we plunged down
    St. Gothard, garden of forget-me-not:
    Yet why should such a flower choose such a spot?
Could we forget that way which once we went
  Though not one flower had bloomed to weave its crown?

23

Beyond the seas we know stretch seas unknown,
  Blue and bright-coloured for our dim and green;
  Beyond the lands we see stretch lands unseen
With many-tinted tangle overgrown;
And icebound seas there are like seas of stone,
  Serenely stormless as death lies serene;
  And lifeless tracts of sand, which intervene
Betwixt the lands where living flowers are blown.
This dead and living world befits our case
  Who live and die: we live in wearied hope,
We die in hope not dead; we run a race
To-day, and find no present halting-place;
  All things we see lie far within our scope,
And still we peer beyond with craving face.

24

The wise do send their hearts before them to
  Dear blessed Heaven, despite the veil between;
  The foolish nurse their hearts within the screen
Of this familiar world, where all we do
Or have is old, for there is nothing new:
  Yet elder far that world we have not seen;
  God's Presence antedates what else hath been:
Many the foolish seem, the wise seem few.
Oh foolishest fond folly of a heart
  Divided, neither here nor there at rest!
    That hankers after Heaven, but clings to earth;
    That neither here nor there knows thorough mirth,
Half-choosing, wholly missing, the good part: —
  Oh fool among the foolish, in thy quest!

25

When we consider what this life we lead
  Is not, and is: how full of toil and pain,
  How blank of rest and of substantial gain,
Beset by hunger earth can never feed,
And propping half our hearts upon a reed;
  We cease to mourn lost treasures, mourned in vain,
  Lost treasures we are fain and yet not fain
To fetch back for a solace of our need.
For who that feel this burden and this strain,
  This wide vacuity of hope and heart,
Would bring their cherished well-beloved again:
  To bleed with them and wince beneath the smart,
To have with stinted bliss such lavish bane,
  To hold in lieu of all so poor a part?

26

This Life is full of numbness and of balk,
  Of haltingness and baffled shortcoming,
  Of promise unfulfilled, of everything
That is puffed vanity and empty talk:
Its very bud hangs cankered on the stalk,
  Its very song-bird trails a broken wing,
  Its very Spring is not indeed like Spring,
But sighs like Autumn round an aimless walk.
This Life we live is dead for all its breath;
  Death's self it is, set off on pilgrimage,
  Travelling with tottering steps the first short stage:
    The second stage is one mere desert dust
    Where Death sits veiled amid creation's rust:—
Unveil thy face, O Death who art not Death.

27

I have dreamed of Death: — what will it be to die
Not in a dream, but in the literal truth,
With all Death's adjuncts ghastly and uncouth,
The pang that is the last and the last sigh?
Too dulled, it may be, for a last good-bye,
Too comfortless for any one to soothe,
A helpless charmless spectacle of ruth
Through long last hours, so long while yet they fly.
So long to those who hopeless in their fear
Watch the slow breath and look for what they dread:
While I supine with ears that cease to hear,
With eyes that glaze, with heart-pulse running down
(Alas! no saint rejoicing on her bed),
May miss the goal at last, may miss a crown.

28

In life our absent friend is far away:
But death may bring our friend exceeding near,
Show him familiar faces long so dear
And lead him back in reach of words we say.
He only cannot utter yea or nay
In any voice accustomed to our ear;
He only cannot make his face appear
And turn the sun back on our shadowed day.
The dead may be around us, dear and dead;
The unforgotten dearest dead may be
Watching us with unslumbering eyes and heart,
Brimful of words which cannot yet be said,
Brimful of knowledge they may not impart,
Brimful of love for you and love for me.

TOUCHING "NEVER"°

Because you never yet have loved me, dear,
  Think you you never can nor ever will?
  Surely while life remains hope lingers still,
Hope the last blossom of life's dying year.
Because the season and mine age grow sere,
  Shall never Spring bring forth her daffodil,
  Shall never sweeter Summer feast her fill
Of roses with the nightingales they hear?
If you had loved me, I not loving you,
  If you had urged me with the tender plea
Of what our unknown years to come might do
(Eternal years, if Time should count too few),
  I would have owned the point you pressed on me
Was possible, or probable, or true.

Before 1882.

BRANDONS BOTH°

Oh fair Milly Brandon, a young maid, a fair maid!
  All her curls are yellow and her eyes are blue,
And her cheeks were rosy red till a secret care made
  Hollow whiteness of their brightness as a care will do.

Still she tends her flowers, but not as in the old days,
  Still she sings her songs, but not the songs of old:
If now it be high Summer her days seem brief and cold days,
  If now it be high Summer her nights are long and cold.

If you have a secret, keep it, pure maid Milly;
  Life is filled with troubles and the world with scorn;
And pity without love is at best times hard and chilly,
  Chilling sore and stinging sore a heart forlorn.

Walter Brandon, do you guess Milly Brandon's secret?
Many things you know, but not everything,
With your locks like raven's plumage, and eyes like an egret,
And a laugh that is music, and such a voice to sing.

Nelly Knollys, she is fair, but she is not fairer
Than fairest Milly Brandon was before she turned so pale:
Oh but Nelly's dearer if she be not rarer,
She need not keep a secret or blush behind a veil.

Beyond the first green hills, beyond the nearest valleys,
Nelly dwells at home beneath her mother's eyes:
Her home is neat and homely, not a cot and not a palace,
Just the home where love sets up his happiest memories.

Milly has no mother; and sad beyond another
Is she whose blessed mother is vanished out of call:
Truly comfort beyond comfort is stored up in a mother
Who bears with all, and hopes through all, and loves us all.

Where peacocks nod and flaunt up and down the terrace,
Furling and unfurling their scores of sightless eyes,
To and fro among the leaves and buds and flowers and berries
Maiden Milly strolls and pauses, smiles and sighs.

On the hedged-in terrace of her father's palace
She may stroll and muse alone, may smile or sigh alone,
Letting thoughts and eyes go wandering over hills and valleys
To-day her father's, and one day to be all her own.

If her thoughts go coursing down lowlands and up highlands,
It is because the startled game are leaping from their lair;
If her thoughts dart homeward to the reedy river islands,
It is because the waterfowl rise startled here or there.

At length a footfall on the steps: she turns, composed and steady,
All the long-descended greatness of her father's house
Lifting up her head; and there stands Walter keen and ready
For hunting or for hawking, a flush upon his brows.

"Good-morrow, fair cousin." "Good-morrow, fairest cousin: 45
The sun has started on his course, and I must start to-day:
If you have done me one good turn you've done me many a dozen,
And I shall often think of you, think of you away."

"Over hill and hollow what quarry will you follow,
Or what fish will you angle for beside the river's edge? 50
There's cloud upon the hill-top and there's mist deep down the hollow,
And fog among the rushes and the rustling sedge."

"I shall speed well enough be it hunting or hawking,
Or casting a bait toward the shyest daintiest fin.
But I kiss your hands, my cousin; I must not loiter talking, 55
For nothing comes of nothing, and I'm fain to seek and win."

"Here's a thorny rose: will you wear it an hour,
Till the petals drop apart still fresh and pink and sweet?
Till the petals drop from the drooping perished flower,
And only the graceless thorns are left of it." 60

"Nay, I have another rose sprung in another garden,
Another rose which sweetens all the world for me.
Be you a tenderer mistress and be you a warier warden
Of your rose, as sweet as mine, and full as fair to see."

"Nay, a bud once plucked there is no reviving, 65
Nor is it worth your wearing now, nor worth indeed my own;
The dead to the dead, and the living to the living.
It's time I go within, for it's time now you were gone."

"Good-bye, Milly Brandon, I shall not forget you,
Though it be good-bye between us for ever from to-day;
I could almost wish to-day that I had never met you,
And I'm true to you in this one word that I say."

"Good-bye, Walter. I can guess which thornless rose you covet;
Long may it bloom and prolong its sunny morn:
Yet as for my one thorny rose, I do not cease to love it,
And if it is no more a flower I love it as a thorn."

BEFORE 1882.

A LIFE'S PARALLELS°

NEVER on this side of the grave again,
On this side of the river,
On this side of the garner of the grain,
Never.

Ever while time flows on and on and on,
That narrow noiseless river,
Ever while corn bows heavy-headed, wan,
Ever.

Never despairing, often fainting, rueing,
But looking back, ah never!
Faint yet pursuing, faint yet still pursuing
Ever.

BEFORE 1882.

GOLDEN SILENCES°

THERE is silence that saith "Ah me!"
There is silence that nothing saith;
One the silence of life forlorn,
One the silence of death;
One is, and the other shall be.

One we know and have known for long,
One we know not, but we shall know,
All we who have ever been born;
Even so, be it so, —
There is silence, despite a song.

Sowing day is a silent day,°
Resting night is a silent night;
But whoso reaps the ripened corn
Shall shout in his delight,
While silences vanish away.

Before 1882.

MARIANA°

Not for me marring or making,
Not for me giving or taking;
I love my Love and he loves not me,
I love my Love and my heart is breaking.

Sweet is Spring in its lovely showing,
Sweet the violet veiled in blowing,
Sweet it is to love and be loved;
Ah sweet knowledge beyond my knowing!

Who sighs for love sighs but for pleasure,
Who wastes for love hoards up a treasure;
Sweet to be loved and take no count,
Sweet it is to love without measure.

Sweet my Love whom I loved to try for,
Sweet my Love whom I love and sigh for,
Will you once love me and sigh for me,
You my Love whom I love and die for?

Before 1882.

ONE FOOT ON SEA, AND ONE ON SHORE°

"Oh tell me once and tell me twice
And tell me thrice to make it plain,
When we who part this weary day,
When we who part shall meet again."

"When windflowers blossom on the sea
And fishes skim along the plain,
Then we who part this weary day,
Then you and I shall meet again."

"Yet tell me once before we part,
Why need we part who part in pain?
If flowers must blossom on the sea,
Why, we shall never meet again.

"My cheeks are paler than a rose,
My tears are salter than the main,
My heart is like a lump of ice
If we must never meet again."

"Oh weep or laugh, but let me be,
And live or die, for all's in vain;
For life's in vain since we must part,
And parting must not meet again

"Till windflowers blossom on the sea
And fishes skim along the plain;
Pale rose of roses, let me be, —
Your breaking heart breaks mine again."

BEFORE 1882.

BUDS AND BABIES°

A MILLION buds are born that never blow,
That sweet with promise lift a pretty head
To blush and wither on a barren bed
And leave no fruit to show.

Sweet, unfulfilled. Yet have I understood
One joy, by their fragility made plain :
Nothing was ever beautiful in vain,
Or all in vain was good.

BEFORE 1882.

BOY JOHNNY

" IF you'll busk you as a bride
And make ready,
It's I will wed you with a ring,
O fair lady."

" Shall I busk me as a bride,
I so bonny,
For you to wed me with a ring,
O boy Johnny ? "

" When you've busked you as a bride
And made ready,
Who else is there to marry you,
O fair lady ? "

" I will find my lover out,
I so bonny,
And you shall bear my wedding-train,
O boy Johnny."

BEFORE 1882.

PASSING AND GLASSING

All things that pass
Are woman's looking-glass ;
They show her how her bloom must fade,
And she herself be laid
With withered roses in the shade ;
With withered roses and the fallen peach,
Unlovely, out of reach
Of summer joy that was.

All things that pass
Are woman's tiring-glass ;
The faded lavender is sweet,
Sweet the dead violet
Culled and laid by and cared for yet ;
The dried-up violets and dried lavender,
Still sweet, may comfort her,
Nor need she cry Alas !

All things that pass
Are wisdom's looking-glass ;
Being full of hope and fear, and still
Brimful of good or ill,
According to our work and will ;
For there is nothing new beneath the sun ;
Our doings have been done,
And that which shall be was.

Before 1882.

PASTIME

A boat amid the ripples, drifting, rocking ;
Two idle people, without pause or aim ;
While in the ominous West there gathers darkness
Flushed with flame.

A hay-cock in a hay-field, backing, lapping;
Two drowsy people pillowed round-about;
While in the ominous West across the darkness
Flame leaps out.

Better a wrecked life than a life so aimless,
Better a wrecked life than a life so soft:
The ominous West glooms thundering, with its fire
Lit aloft.

BEFORE 1882.

BIRCHINGTON CHURCHYARD°

A LOWLY hill which overlooks a flat,
Half sea, half country side;
A flat-shored sea of low-voiced creeping tide
Over a chalky weedy mat.

A hill of hillocks, flowery and kept green
Round Crosses raised for hope,
With many-tinted sunsets where the slope
Faces the lingering western sheen.

A lowly hope, a height that is but low,
While Time sets solemnly,
While the tide rises of Eternity,
Silent and neither swift nor slow.

APRIL 1882.

MICHAEL F. M. ROSSETTI

Born 22 April 1881; Died 24 January 1883.

1

A HOLY Innocent gone home
Without so much as one sharp wounding word;
A blessed Michael in heaven's lofty dome
Without a sword.

2

Brief dawn and noon and setting time!
Our rapid-rounding moon has fled;
A black eclipse before the prime
Has swallowed up that shining head.
Eternity holds up her looking-glass: —
The eclipse of Time will pass,
And all that lovely light return to sight.

3

I watch the showers and think of flowers:
Alas my flower that shows no fruit!
My snowdrop plucked, my daisy shoot
Plucked from the root.
Soon Spring will shower, the world will flower,
A world of buds will promise fruit,
Pear-trees will shoot and apples shoot
Sound at the root.
Bud of an hour, far off you flower;
My bud, far off you ripen fruit;
My prettiest bud, my straightest shoot,
Sweet at the root.

4

The youngest bud of five,
The least lamb of the fold,
Bud not to blossom, yet to thrive
Away from cold:
Lamb which we shall not see
Leap at its pretty pranks,
Our lamb at rest and full of glee
On heavenly banks.

JANUARY 1883.

A WINTRY SONNET

A ROBIN said: "The Spring will never come,
And I shall never care to build again."
A Rosebush said: "These frosts are wearisome,
My sap will never stir for sun or rain."
The half Moon said: "These nights are fogged and slow,
I neither care to wax nor care to wane."
The ocean said: "I thirst from long ago,
Because earth's rivers cannot fill the main. —"
When Springtime came, red Robin built a nest,
And trilled a lover's song in sheer delight.
Grey hoarfrost vanished, and the Rose with might
Clothed her in leaves and buds of crimson core.
The dim Moon brightened. Ocean sunned his crest,
Dimpled his blue, yet thirsted evermore.

BEFORE 1884.

ONE SEA-SIDE GRAVE°

UNMINDFUL of the roses,
Unmindful of the thorn,
A reaper tired reposes
Among his gathered corn:
So might I, till the morn!

Cold as the cold Decembers,
Past as the days that set,
While only one remembers
And all the rest forget, —
But one remembers yet.

SPRING 1884.

WHO SHALL SAY?

I TOILED on, but thou
Wast weary of the way,
And so we parted: now
Who shall say
Which is happier — I or thou?

I am weary now
On the solitary way:
But art thou rested, thou?
Who shall say
Which of us is calmer now?

Still my heart's love, thou,
In thy secret way,
Art still remembered now:
Who shall say —
Still rememberest thou?

CIRCA 1884.

ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER

A ROSE which spied one Swallow
Made haste to blush and blow:
"Others are sure to follow":
Ah no, not so!
The wandering clouds still owe

A few fresh flakes of snow,
Chill fog must fill the hollow,
Before the bird-stream flow
In flood across the main,
And Winter's woe
End in glad Summer come again.
Then thousand flowers may blossom by the shore, —
But that Rose never more.

BEFORE 1886.

A FROG'S FATE

CONTEMPTUOUS of his home beyond
The village and the village-pond,
A large-souled Frog who spurned each byeway
Hopped along the imperial highway
Nor grunting pig nor barking dog
Could disconcert so great a Frog.
The morning dew was lingering yet,
His sides to cool, his tongue to wet:
The night-dew, when the night should come,
A travelled Frog would send him home.

Not so, alas! The wayside grass
Sees him no more: not so, alas!
A broad-wheeled waggon unawares
Ran him down, his joys, his cares.
From dying choke one feeble croak
The Frog's perpetual silence broke: —
"Ye buoyant Frogs, ye great and small,
Even I am mortal after all!
My road to fame turns out a wry way;
I perish on the hideous highway;
Oh for my old familiar byeway!"

The choking Frog sobbed and was gone ;
The Waggoner strode whistling on.
Unconscious of the carnage done,
Whistling that Waggoner strode on —
Whistling (it may have happened so)
" A froggy would a-wooing go."
A hypothetic frog trolled he,
Obtuse to a reality.
O rich and poor, O great and small,
Such oversights beset us all.
The mangled Frog abides incog,
The uninteresting actual frog :
The hypothetic frog alone
Is the one frog we dwell upon.

BEFORE 1886.

IF LOVE IS NOT WORTH LOVING°

IF love is not worth loving, then life is not worth living,
Nor aught is worth remembering but well forgot ;
For store is not worth storing and gifts are not worth giving,
If love is not ;

And idly cold is death-cold, and life-heat idly hot,
And vain is any offering and vainer our receiving,
And vanity of vanities is all our lot.

Better than life's heaving heart is death's heart unheaving,
Better than the opening leaves are the leaves that rot,
For there is nothing left worth achieving or retrieving,
If love is not.

BEFORE 1886.

NOW THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY°

Love said nay, while Hope kept saying
All his sweetest say,
Hope so keen to start a-maying! —
Love said nay.

Love was bent to watch and pray;
Long the watching, long the praying;
Hope grew drowsy, pale and grey.

Hope in dreams set off a-straying,
All his dream-world flushed by May;
While unslumbering, praying, weighing,
Love said nay.

Before 1886.

JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME°

Love understands the mystery, whereof
We can but spell a surface history:
Love knows, remembers: let us trust in Love:
Love understands the mystery.

Love weighs the event, the long pre-history,
Measures the depth beneath, the height above,
The mystery, with the ante-mystery.

To love and to be grieved befits a dove
Silently telling her bead-history:
Trust all to Love, be patient and approve:
Love understands the mystery.

Before 1886.

CARDINAL NEWMAN°

In the grave whither thou goest.

O WEARY Champion of the Cross, lie still :
Sleep thou at length the all-embracing sleep :
Long was thy sowing-day, rest now and reap :
Thy fast was long, feast now thy spirit's fill.
Yea take thy fill of love, because thy will
Chose love not in the shallows but the deep :
Thy tides were spring-tides, set against the neap
Of calmer souls : thy flood rebuked their rill.
Now night has come to thee — please God, of rest :
So some time must it come to every man ;
To first and last, where many last are first.
Now fixed and finished thine eternal plan,
Thy best has done its best, thy worst its worst :
Thy best its best, please God, thy best its best.

16 AUGUST 1890.

A HELPMEET FOR HIM°

WOMAN was made for man's delight ;
Charm, O woman, be not afraid !
His shadow by day, his moon by night,
Woman was made.

Her strength with weakness is overlaid ;
Meek compliances veil her might ;
Him she stays by whom she is stayed.

World-wide champion of truth and right,
Hope in gloom and in danger aid,
Tender and faithful, ruddy and white,
Woman was made.

BEFORE 1891.

EXULTATE DEO

Many a flower hath perfume for its dower,
And many a bird a song,
And harmless lambs milkwhite beside their dams
Frolic along;
Perfume and song and whiteness offering praise
In humble peaceful ways.

Man's high degree hath will and memory,
Affection and desire,
By loftier ways he mounts of prayer and praise;
Fire unto fire,
Deep unto deep responsive, height to height,
Until he walk in white.

Before 1891.

HOW GREAT IS LITTLE MAN°

How great is little man!
Sun, moon, and stars respond to him,
Shine or grow dim
Harmonious with his span.

How little is great man!
More changeable than changeful moon,
Nor half in tune
With Heaven's harmonious plan.

Ah rich man! ah poor man!
Make ready for the testing day
When wastes away
What bears not fire or fan.

Thou heir of all things, man,
  Pursue the saints by heavenward track:
  They looked not back;
Run thou, as erst they ran.

Little and great is man:
  Great if he will, or if he will
  A pigmy still;
For what he will he can.

BEFORE 1893.

QUINQUAGESIMA°

LOVE is alone the worthy law of love:
  All other laws have presupposed a taint:
  Love is the law from kindled saint to saint,
From lamb to lamb, from dove to answering dove.
Love is the motive of all things that move
  Harmonious by free will without constraint:
  Love learns and teaches: love shall man acquaint
With all he lacks, which all his lack is love.
Because Love is the fountain, I discern
  The stream as love: for what but love should flow
    From fountain Love? not bitter from the sweet!
  I ignorant, have I laid claim to know?
    Oh teach me, Love, such knowledge as is meet
For one to know who is fain to love and learn.

BEFORE 1893.

SLEEPING AT LAST°

SLEEPING at last, the trouble and tumult over,
  Sleeping at last, the struggle and horror past,
Cold and white, out of sight of friend and of lover,
    Sleeping at last.

No more a tired heart downcast or overcast,
No more pangs that wring or shifting fears that hover
Sleeping at last in a dreamless sleep locked fast.

Fast asleep. Singing birds in their leafy cover
Cannot wake her, nor shake her the gusty blast.
Under the purple thyme and the purple clover
Sleeping at last.

CIRCA 1893.

NOTES

The text of this edition has been taken from the 1911 edition of Christina Rossetti's *Poems*, published by The Macmillan Co. which was edited with loving care by the poet's younger brother, William Michael Rossetti. For the most part the text has been consistently followed, though the American usage as to quotation marks has been adopted, and a few minor errors have been corrected. Some of the notes of Mr. Rossetti (here signed W. M. R.) have been used in part or in whole in this edition.

LOVE AND HOPE (Page 3)

For a child of twelve these theological distinctions are, to say the least, unusual. The stanzas prove her early religious concern. Love, the one thing needful, she had; Hope she was mainly without. Compare Herbert's *Love*, and *Hope:*—

LOVE

Love bade me welcome: yet my soul drew back,
Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
If I lacked anything.

"A guest," I answered, "worthy to be here."
Love said, "You shall be he."
"I?—the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,
I cannot look on thee."
Love took my hand, and, smiling, did reply,
"Who made the eyes but I?"

"Truth, Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
Go where it doth deserve."
"And know you not," says Love, "who bore the blame?"
"My dear, then I will serve."
"You must sit down," says Love, "and taste my meat."
So I did sit and eat.

HOPE

I gave to Hope a watch of mine: but he
An anchor gave to me.
Then an old prayer-book I did present:
And he an optic sent.
With that I gave a vial full of tears:
But he a few green ears:
Ah, loiterer! I'll no more, no more I'll bring:
I did expect a ring.

CHARITY (PAGE 3)

In this poem the word "charity" is to be taken in its earlier sense of Christian or spiritual love, as in the New Testament, 1 *Corinthians* xiii.

"The foregoing verses are imitated from that beautiful little poem *Virtue* by George Herbert." — Christina's MS. note. Compare *Virtue*: —

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
The bridal of the earth and sky;
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night;
For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave
Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye;
Thy root is ever in its grave,
And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses,
A box where sweets compacted lie;
My music shows ye have your closes,
For all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
Like seasoned timber, never gives;
But though the whole world turn to coal,
Then chiefly lives.

Which poem ought you to like the bet[illegible]?

SERENADE (Page 4)

Impressionistic; note how all the details harmonize to produce the romantic atmosphere. Observe, too, how agreeably the girlish author of barely fifteen attains variety in metre and rhyme. Point out the "feminine" rhymes. Have you discovered the grouping of the triplets?

22. Do you find the personification offensive? When was this figure most common in poetry? Is it now accounted good form?

23. Is this verse in keeping with romanticism? What English poets are suggested?

TASSO AND LEONORA (Page 5)

Torquato Tasso (1544–1599) was a distinguished Italian poet, best known as the author of *Jerusalem Delivered* (c. 1575). His relations to Leonora, sister of Alfonso II, Duke of Ferrara, are thought to have been mythical, and his insanity is attributable rather to harsh criticism than to disappointed affection.

Ascertain the origin and nature of the Sonnet. Write the scheme of this one. How does it differ from the so-called Shakespearean Sonnet? If used before the great dramatist's time (was it?) the more exact name would be English Sonnet.

THE DEAD CITY (Page 5)

First called *The City of Statues.* This is the longest of the *Juvenilia.* It may have been suggested by *The Arabian Nights*, "one of the comparatively few books that my sister, from a very early age, read frequently and with delight. Beyond this, taken along with what is obviously indicated in the poem itself, I cannot say whether any particular intention was present to her mind." — W. M. R. It is a dramatic fantasy, somewhat in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe. Compare *The House of Usher.* How symbolical it is meant to be does not appear. The "wood" may be a faint reminiscence of Dante's gloomy wood, and may represent life. There is, as often, a suggestion, too, of the vanity of things. In perhaps the same period she wrote a sonnet of darker purport.

The Dead City is undoubtedly a remarkable poem to have been written at the age of sixteen, and apart from its imaginative and other beauties, has a special interest in the fact that it is mani-

festly the germ of the well-known *Goblin Market*, or perhaps it would be better to say that on looking back we discern several premonitions of well-known passages in the later poem, for the *motifs* of *The Dead City* and *Goblin Market* are quite different. — SHARP.

25. It has been assumed that "master" is a desperate resort for the sake of the rhyme. But, as W. M. Rossetti has pointed out, the inference is unwarranted. That "I" means the author must not be taken for granted — a position not supported by l. 34.

28. Note the felicity of "glanced."

83. Symbolizing spiritual desolation?

86. Note the girl's poetic description — the selection of the essential — in stanza after stanza; especially the sensuousness of ll. 166–205. Compare *Goblin Market*, p. 88, and *A Birthday*, p. 63.

140. *Basons*. This is an older spelling of the modern basin. It was used by Shakespeare in "The Taming of the Shrew," II. i. 350: "Basons and ewers to lave her dainty hands."

205. An inverted simile? Consult Genung's *Working Principles of Rhetoric*, p. 79, 2, example.

225. Petrifaction of the heart in selfish indifference to others?

231. Note that each stanza constitutes a statuesque picture. Which to you is the most appealing?

246–250. Compare Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

275. Quite characteristic of Christina Rossetti herself. In whole or in part, some critics are reminded of Tennyson's "The Palace of Art" and of his "Day-Dream."

ELEANOR (PAGE 15)

This may be a portrait from the life — I know not now of whom. — W. M. R.

Like all beauty, it is its own excuse for being. Stevenson somewhere speaks of the *duty* of being happy, and of the subtle ministry of joy. If you know Browning's *Evelyn Hope* you will recall the benediction of such a presence. Eleanor is not a phantom of delight; she is a beneficent reality. Compare *Annie* in the 1904 *Poems*.

ISIDORA (PAGE 16)

Written at sixteen, this poem is noteworthy as a dramatic monologue.

DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY (Page 18)

Though the theme is different, this poem will remind some of Tennyson's *The Two Voices*. The metre is reminiscent of Dante. What is it?

22. Here, as elsewhere in both this and other poems by our author, we feel the influence of *Ecclesiastes*. Note the biblical allusions.

Do you think the poet is morbid or pessimistic in this poem, or is she merely dramatic?

SONG (Page 21)

What are the qualities that constitute song? Who are the great song writers? Miss Rossetti's secular songs are all too few, more's the pity. In this poem the note struck is almost habitually doleful. Her touch was deft, her music lilting, her conception clever and significant.

She sat and sang alway sings itself without need of formal music. Note the contrast of the first two stanzas, and the alternate antithesis of the verses of the last — the cheerful and the pensive. Do you see the pictures?

Contrast with this Longfellow's *The Arrow and the Song*.

SONG (Page 21)

When I am dead, my dearest, has an even more plaintive note. The lyric quality is poignant in its pathos. Grateful is the absence of platitude — it is as simple as it is sincere. This "celebrated lyric has perhaps been oftener quoted, and certainly oftener set to music, than anything else by Christina Rossetti." — W. M. R. This brother possessed a setting by Mary Carmichael and ten more by other composers.

"*Dream Land* (p. 25), *Passing Away* (p. 106), *When I am dead, my dearest*, etc., have taken root in our literature, and will last as long as it." — Sharp.

Christina wrote to Gabriel: "A human being wanting to set one of my things to music has at last not fixed on *When I am dead*, but on *Grown and Flown*."

Compare Swinburne's *Rococo*.

Here may be given a few other songs: —

Song

Two doves upon the selfsame branch,
  Two lilies on a single stem,
Two butterflies upon one flower : —
  Oh happy they who look on them !

Who look upon them hand in hand
  Flushed in the rosy summer light;
Who look upon them hand in hand,
  And never give a thought to night.

Before 1863.

Grown and Flown

I loved my love from green of Spring
  Until sere Autumn's fall;
But now that leaves are withering
  How should one love at all?
  One heart's too small
For hunger, cold, love, everything.

I loved my love on sunny days
  Until late Summer's wane;
But now that frost begins to glaze
  How should one love again?
  Nay, love and pain
Walk wide apart in diverse ways.

I loved my love — alas to see
  That this should be, alas!
I thought that this could scarcely be,
  Yet has it come to pass:
  Sweet sweet love was,
Now bitter bitter grown to me.

21 December 1864.

Song

Oh what comes over the sea,
  Shoals and quicksands past;
And what comes home to me,
  Sailing slow, sailing fast?

A wind comes over the sea
  With a moan in its blast;
But nothing comes home to me,
  Sailing slow, sailing fast.

Let me be, let me be,
For my lot is cast:
Land or sea all's one to me,
And sail it slow or fast.

11 JUNE 1866.

SYMBOLS (PAGE 22)

Christina's symbolism, like Gabriel's, was inherited from the father, whose facility in finding types and parallels led him at times sadly astray. Uniformly, however, the daughter's art was supported by her common sense, her sense of humor, or, what is practically the same thing, her sense of proportion. The poem hints at spiritual law in the natural world and its rather obvious moral presents a useful suggestion to each one of us. Not unpleasant is the ancient literary form in the last stanza. What is the form?

What is symbolism? Do you know the symbolistic verse of Blake? Who is the eminent symbolist of our time?

ON KEATS (PAGE 22)

Read a good account of Keats, Matthew Arnold's, for example, in *Essays in Criticism*, or Lowell's in *Among My Books*.

2. Read Shelley's *Adonais* for an eloquent eulogy, and for a beautiful description of Keats's grave. Even more pertinent is the following from the *Life of Keats* by William Michael Rossetti, in *Great Writers:* "Keats was buried in the Protestant Cemetery at Rome amid the overgrown ruins of the Honorian walls, surrounded by the pyramid-tomb of Caius Cestius. . . . There were but few graves on the spot when Keats was laid there. . . . A little altar-tomb was set up for him, sculptured with a Greek lyre, and inscribed with his name and his own epitaph, 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.'"

Compare Mrs. Browning's *Cowper's Grave* for a much diffuser treatment — one of her most popular poems.

10. Why quotation marks?

How does this sonnet scheme differ from that on p. 5?

Is the date correct for St. Agnes' Eve?

FOR ADVENT (Page 23)

When is Advent?

Do you think the poem correspondent to the title? Have the details of the successive stanzas peculiar relation to the season?

12. A fine phrase; "old" is intensive and affectionate sometimes. Is it so here, or is it simply "ancient?" Is the earth dear because of its relations or because it is to provide a grave?

23. Morbid?

Is the metre harmonious with the spirit of the poem?

Always trace the allusions.

DREAM LAND (Page 25)

Christina made three colored designs to this lyric. In the first we see the "She" of the poem journeying to her bourne. She is a rather sepulchral-looking, white-clad figure holding a cross; the "single star" and the "water-springs" are apparent, also a steep slope of purplish hill which she is leaving behind. The second design gives the nightingale singing on a thorny rose bough. In the third, "She" is rising and ascending winged; her pinions are golden, of butterfly form. —W. M. R.

In what part of the poem does its meaning become most apparent?

Compare Swinburne's *The Garden of Proserpine.*

. . . Miss Rossetti ranks foremost among living poetesses. She, and she alone, could write such magic lyrics as *Dream Land.* — Sharp.

Read Poe's poem of the same title.

17. A persistent note. It is interesting to mark its recurrence, notably in the following fine sonnet:

Rest

O earth, lie héavily upon her eyes;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.

Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir:
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

15 MAY 1849.

27. When this poem appeared in *The Germ*, 1850, the phrase "at the heart's core" read "that shall endure." Which is preferable?

THREE NUNS (PAGE 26)

The second section of this poem was the first written, standing then as a separate composition. The united poem was inserted into the prose tale *Maude*, with the observation: "Pray read the mottoes; put together, they form a most exquisite little song which the nuns sing in Italy." *Maude* was written toward 1850 — perhaps earlier. It was published in 1897, but the poem of *Three Nuns* was excluded from it on copyright grounds. The meaning of the mottoes runs thus: This heart sighs, and I know not wherefore. It may be sighing for love, but to me it says not so. Answer me, my heart, wherefore sighest thou? It answers: I want God — I sigh for Jesus. — W. M. R.

After enjoying the poem for its own sake, point out the figures. Explain the allusions.

Does the poem impress you as the utterances of three several nuns, or of only one under different conditions? Few have great dramatic power. How many *living* characters are there in American fiction? Innumerable are shadows. Which of the three parts do you like most? Point out the deepest human interest.

"Sweetest eyes were ever seen." — The refrain of Mrs. Browning's *Catarina to Camoens*, one of Browning's favorites and the occasion of the title, *Sonnets from the Portuguese*.

166. The rose seems to have been Christina's favorite flower. Mention that of other poets. Compare the following:

THE SOLITARY ROSE

O happy rose, red rose, that bloomest lonely
Where there are none to gather while they love thee;
That art perfumed by thine own fragrance only,
Resting like incense round thee and above thee; —
Thou hearest nought save some pure stream that flows,
O happy rose.

What though for thee no nightingales are singing ?
They chant one eve, but hush them in the morning.
Near thee no little moths and bees are winging
To steal thy honey when the day is dawning; —
Thou keep'st thy sweetness till the twilight's close,
O happy rose.

Then rest in peace, thou lone and lovely flower;
Yea be thou glad, knowing that none are near thee,
To mar thy beauty in a wanton hour,
And scatter all thy leaves nor deign to wear thee.
Securely in thy solitude repose,
O happy rose.

15 March 1847.

The Rose

O rose, thou flower of flowers, thou fragrant wonder,
Who shall describe thee in thy ruddy prime,
Thy perfect fullness in the summer time,
When the pale leaves blushingly part asunder
And show the warm red heart lies glowing under ?
Thou shouldst bloom surely in some sunny clime,
Untouched by blights and chilly winter's rime,
Where lightnings never flash nor peals the thunder.
And yet in happier spheres they cannot need thee
So much as we do with our weight of woe;
Perhaps they would not tend, perhaps not heed thee,
And thou wouldst lonely and neglected grow:
And He who is all wise, He hath decreed thee
To gladden earth and cheer all hearts below.

17 April 1847.

Queen Rose

The jessamine shows like a star;
The lilies sway like sceptres slim;
Fair clematis from near and far
Sets forth its wayward tangled whim;
Curved meadowsweet blooms rich and dim; —
But yet a rose is fairer far.

The jessamine is odorous; so
Maid-lilies are, and clematis;
And where tall meadowsweet-flowers grow
A rare and subtle perfume is; —
What can there be more choice than these ? —
A rose when it doth bud and blow.

Let others choose sweet jessamine,
Or weave their lily-crown aright,
And let who love it pluck and twine
Loose clematis, or draw delight
From meadowsweets' cluster downy white—
The rose, the perfect rose, be mine.

16 AUGUST 1849.

Where shall I find a white rose blowing?—
Out in the garden where all sweets be.—
But out in my garden the snow was snowing
And never a white rose opened for me.
Nought but snow and a wind were blowing
And snowing.

Where shall I find a blush rose blushing?—
On the garden wall or the garden bed.—
But out in my garden the rain was rushing
And never a blush rose raised its head.
Nothing glowing, flushing or blushing:
Rain rushing.

Where shall I find a red rose budding?—
Out in the garden where all things grow.—
But out in my garden a flood was flooding
And never a red rose began to blow.
Out in a flooding what should be budding?
All flooding!

Now is winter and now is sorrow,
No roses but only thorns to-day:
Thorns will put on roses to-morrow,
Winter and sorrow scudding away.
No more winter and no more sorrow
To-morrow.

1884.

IS AND WAS (PAGE 33)

The last line of this poem, "Doing all from self-respect," may be worth a moment's comment. Much about the time when the poem was written, a lady told my sister that the latter seemed to do "all from self-respect," not from fellow-feeling with others, or from kindly consideration for them. Christina mentioned the remark with an admission that it hid a blot in such characters, in which a certain amount of reserve and distance, not remote from

hauteur, was certainly at that date perceptible. She laid the hint to heart, and, I think, never forgot it. A like phrase appears in a poem of much later date, July, 1865, *Enrica*. — W. M. R.

The poem, however, is not otherwise personal, though l. 24 suggests a record by William: "I recollect having once told her jocularly (she was perhaps barely seventeen at the time) that she would soon become so polite it would be impossible to live with her."

THE SUMMER IS ENDED (Page 34)

The melancholy note is recurrent and persistent. Do you find it morbid? Some one has remarked that Christina Rossetti is by preëminence the poet of death. No wonder; for years, like Mrs. Browning, she held to life, as it were, with one hand and to death with the other. What other poets are rather engrossed with such themes?

Are Poe and others correct in asserting that art in men and women of genius is inevitably touched with melancholy?

Is the pointing satisfactory here and elsewhere?

A PAUSE (Page 35)

What do you conceive to be the meaning of this poem? May it, like *What?* (p. xxii), allude to her early blighted romance? It is a beautiful lyric cry.

CONSIDER THE LILIES OF THE FIELD (Page 36)

Are homilies the function of flowers? Compare Emerson's *The Rhodora*. Miss Rossetti does not moralize her song. Does Bryant? This is practically a paraphrase of the Christ's beautiful illustration.

17. Of course, you recall the familiar verses from Gray's *Elegy*:

> "Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

19. What American poet has modestly chosen "the merest grass" for the title of his amazing book? Read Ruskin's eloquence on grass in *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, ch. xiv.

BALLAD (Page 37)

Is this the ballad stanza? Is it the ballad manner? What constitutes its appeal? Note compression. Were the popular ballads prevailingly joyous or sad, not to say tragic? Seek information on this literary type.

Why are stanzas six and eight longer? Do you *feel* the difference? You will remember similar departure from the standard in *The Ancient Mariner*.

Compare *Mother and Child*, which Rossetti says Blake might have written.

Mother and Child

"What art thou thinking of," said the mother,
"What art thou thinking of, my child?"
"I was thinking of heaven," he answered her,
And looked up in her face and smiled.

"And what didst thou think of heaven?" she said;
"Tell me, my little one."
"Oh I thought that there the flowers never fade,
"That there never sets the sun."

"And wouldst thou love to go thither, my child,
Thither wouldst thou love to go,
And leave the pretty flowers that wither,
And the sun that sets below?"

"Oh I would be glad to go there, mother,
To go and live there now;
And I would pray for thy coming, mother;—
My mother, wouldst not thou?"

10 January 1846.

COBWEBS (Page 40)

Perhaps in all this twilight realm — loveless land — the significant idea for the author was in the last verse. Is the Sonnet literal?

TO THE END (Page 41)

Do you know flower symbolism? Consult *Hamlet*, iv, 2; *Winter's Tale*, iv, 3; and any other source available. Page 2317 of

the *Standard Dictionary* will be found helpful. "Myrtle" and "rose" in *Charity*, page 3, are emblematic of what?

25. *An Angel.* Read Browning's *The Guardian Angel.*

67. The last quatrain of this poem seems to present a certain reminiscence (yet far from being a plagiarism) from Dante Rossetti's early achievement, *The Blessed Damozel.* — W. M. R.

THE LOWEST ROOM (Page 44)

The original title of this poem was *A Fight over the Body of Homer* — perhaps the better title of the two; it contains, in MS., various stanzas which were omitted in publication. This is the poem on which Dante Gabriel Rossetti, in a published letter to his sister, dated 1875, made the following remarks: — "A real taint, to some extent, of modern vicious style, derived from that same source [Mrs. Browning] — what might be called a falsetto muscularity — always seemed to me much too prominent in the long piece called *The Lowest Room.* This I think is now included for the first time, and I am sorry for it. . . . Everything in which this tone appears is utterly foreign to your primary impulses. . . . If I were you, I would rigidly keep guard on this matter if you write in the future; and ultimately exclude from your writings everything (or almost everything) so tainted." Christina, on receiving this letter, did not acquiesce in its purport, but later on seemed a little more inclined to do so. However, she always retained *The Lowest Room* in succeeding editions. To me it hardly appears that my brother's view can be pronounced correct. The real gist of *The Lowest Room* — *i.e.* the final acceptance, by the supposed speaker, of a subordinate and bedimmed position — is clearly the very reverse of "falsetto muscularity"; if anything of that kind shows in the earlier part of the poem, it shows only to be waved aside.

— W. M. R.

Which title do you prefer? What consideration probably led the author to adopt that now used?

To Gabriel Christina wrote 14 December, 1875: . . . I am truly sorry if I have judged amiss in including *The Lowest Room;* which, however, I remind you, had already seen the light in *Mac's Mag.* To my thinking it is by no means one of the most morbid or most personal of the group; but I am no good judge in my own cause.

Again, perhaps 22 December, 1875: . . . After impervious density I begin to see light (I think) on your objection to *The Lowest Room;* and already regret having inserted it, you having scale-dipping weight with me. Bulk was a seductive element. However, as to date, it *was* written before my first volume appeared: so certainly before Miss J[ean] I[ngelow] misled me anywhither. I still don't dislike it myself, but can lay no claim to impartiality.

Though in ll. 1–6, and 174–196, appear sentiments common in Christina Rossetti, the poem is not consistently autobiographical. The younger sister, "intuitively wise" (l. 212), is certainly not Maria Rossetti. Do you find in these sisters something of the Martha and Mary of the Bethany home, so attractively presented in the gospel?

23. Æacides, a patronymic of the swift-footed Achilles, grandson of Æacus, King of the Myrmidons. Were Achilles and Ajax the Great related?

30. Interpret "wind of spice." Compare *To-day and To-morrow*, l. 11: "Wake, O south wind sweet with spice."

31. Is this the "muscularity" of which Gabriel speaks above?

33. If we assume the speaker to be Miss Rossetti, is she lamenting her narrower range, her feminine limitations? According to some, she builded better than she knew.

35. Note the enchantment of the past — the "good old times."

41. Or do we encounter the "falsetto muscularity" here? Who was the champion of muscular Christianity?

54. The Rossetti motto. Christina's "force of will, especially where any point of duty seemed to be concerned, was in full proportion to the family motto, *Frangas non flectas*" [you may break, not bend]. — W. M. R.

66. Cloth on which the "white embroidering hand" (l. 11) was working.

93. Perhaps an allusion to her father's exile from Italy.

109 ff. What do you think of these stanzas as a philosophy of life? Recall literary analogues.

127. Is the Greek ideal of heroism and manhood satisfactory in Achilles, even when, remembering his friend, he emerges from his tent?

153. How?

249. Husbandry. Is this word the same in meaning as in *Hamlet:* "Borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry;" and in *Macbeth:* "There's husbandry in heaven."

271. Compare the following: —

CALLED TO BE SAINTS

The lowest place. Ah, Lord, how steep and high
That lowest place whereon a saint shall sit!
Which of us halting, trembling, pressing nigh,
Shall quite attain to it?

Yet, Lord, Thou pressest nigh to hail and grace
Some happy soul, it may be still unfit
For Right Hand or for Left Hand, but whose place
Waits there prepared for it.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL (PAGE 54)

Christina, says Mr. Rossetti, acted as godmother to various children, mostly children of poor people. In work such as this poem, Miss Rossetti was peculiarly happy. She was fond of religious themes, and she knew and loved children; her combination of the two themes results in poetry of crystalline purity.

A TRIAD (PAGE 56)

This very fine sonnet was published in the volume of 1862, *Goblin Market and other Poems*, but was omitted in subsequent issues. I presume that my sister, with overstrained scrupulosity, considered its moral tone to be somewhat open to exception. In such a view I by no means agree, and I therefore reproduce it here, as I did in the volume of *New Poems*, 1896. — W. M. R.

It is in certain of her objective sonnets that her touch is most firm and picturesque, her intelligence most weighty, and her style most completely characteristic. The reader need but turn to *After Death*, *On the Wing*, *Venus's Looking-Glass*, and the marvelous *A Triad*, to concede the truth of this; while in the more obvious subjective manner of sonnet-writing, she is one of the most successful poets of our time. — GOSSE.

LOVE FROM THE NORTH (PAGE 57)

Was originally named *In the Days of the Sea Kings*, which is perhaps the better title of the two. — W. M. R.

As it has been picturesquely put, "*She* was the man in the first case; but, in the second, he 'with eyes of dangerous grey.'"

The dramatic quality of the poem is striking; the situation, though trite, cleverly managed. Take the plot for a short story. The "strong man from the north" is the kind of hero most admired by the speaker in *The Lowest Room*, — the kind who took what he would when he might.

29. The full phrase is "bell, book, and candle."

IN THE ROUND TOWN AT JHANSI (Page 58)

On hearing this tragic episode of the Indian Mutiny, my sister composed the poem, which I always rate among her masterpieces; and she published it in the *Goblin Market* volume, 1862. In a subsequent reissue she added the following note: "I retain this little poem, not as historically accurate, but as written and published before I heard the supposed facts of its first verse contradicted." In that copy of the *Goblin Market* volume in which Christina drew a few colored designs, she has put a head- and tail-piece to the Jhansi poem. The former is a flag displayed — pink field, with a device of two caressing doves. The latter is the same flag, drooping from its broken staff, and seen on the reverse side, besmeared with blood. — W. M. R.

The student will have observed Miss Rossetti's remarkable faculty for seizing upon essentials and presenting them vividly. Subjective as she mainly is, lyrical as is her method for the most part, some of these poems indicate noble narrative and dramatic vigor.

A BETTER RESURRECTION (Page 59)

Can there be found in the rank of English religious poetry two more majestic lyrics than *A Better Resurrection* and *Passing Away?* — Benson.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS (Page 59)

Few things written by Christina contain more of her innermost self than this. In her volume *Verses* (published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge) she took the first and last stanzas of this vehement utterance, and, altering the metre observably, and the diction not a little, she published them with the title,

Whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. I think it only right to give the poem in full, as well as the extracted portion of it.

— W. M. R.

Note the second quatrain of each stanza. Have you seen the rhyme order? Compare Gabriel's *My Sister's Sleep*, written in 1847, and published in 1850 before *In Memoriam*.

What does the poem mean? Explain mysticism. Is the thought morbid?

51. A favorite quotation. Place it. Compare *For Advent*, p. 68, l. 37.

MEMORY (Page 61)

It will be observed that this remarkable utterance is made up of two separate poems, written at a rather wide interval of dates. No. 1 was originally named *A Blank;* No. 2, *A Memory.* — W. M. R.

Can you solve the puzzle? The literary merit of the performance is unquestionable. Has the author in mind her more or less blighting disappointments in love? See Introduction, p. xxviii.

A BIRTHDAY (Page 63)

I have more than once been asked whether I could account for the outburst of exuberant joy evidenced in this celebrated lyric; I am unable to do so. Its correct sequence is shown in these pages, between Part I of *Memory* and *An Apple Gathering* — poems neither of which is at all in the like strain. It is, of course, possible to infer that the *Birthday* is a mere piece of poetical composition, not testifying to any corresponding emotion of its author at the time; but I am hardly prepared to think that. In some illustrated comic paper a parody of the lyric was printed; it amused Christina, who pasted it into a copy of her *Poems*, 1875. It may perhaps amuse other people, and I give it here: —

An Unexpected Pleasure

(*After Christina G. Rossetti*)

My heart is like one asked to dine
Whose evening dress is up the spout;
My heart is like a man would be
Whose raging tooth is half pulled out.

My heart is like a howling swell
  Who boggles on his upper C;
My heart is madder than all these —
  My wife's mamma has come to tea.

Raise me a bump upon my crown,
  Bang it till green in purple dies;
Feed me on bombs and fulminates,
  And turncocks of a medium size.
Work me a suit in crimson apes
  And sky-blue beetles on the spree;
Because the mother of my wife
  Has come — and means to stay with me.

— W. M. R.

9. You will not overlook the fine sensuousness of the second stanza.

10. *vair.* A kind of fur used in heraldic devices.

There is not a chord of the minor key in *A Birthday*, and yet the impression which its cumulative ecstasy leaves upon the nerves is almost pathetic. — Gosse.

Here and there also in her poems the verse has occasionally that "decorative" quality, as of cloth of gold stiff with sumptuous needlework design, which is a constant effect in the painter's poetry — that rich material symbolism, such as finds its most perfect illustration in a poem like the *Song of Solomon*. One lyric I am particularly thinking of is especially wonderful, in that, rich as is the garment, the song does not merely wear it, but animates it all through with throbbing life, so that the great rich images seem to come but as the native utterance of the happy heart. . . . It is late in the day to be quoting *A Birthday*, . . . but . . . it most nearly embodies all the various qualities of her poetry. It is full of that strange light of imagination, it is a little spring of bubbling song, its passion is spontaneous, its art is flawless.

— Le Gallienne.

AN APPLE GATHERING (Page 63)

Her strength as an artist is not so much in mastery over the rhythm, or even over the verbal texture of poetry, as in the skill with which she expresses an allegorical intent by subtle suggestion instead of direct preachment. Herein *An Apple Gathering* is quite perfect. — Watts[-Dunton].

Elsewhere the same critic speaks of it as "the most perfect parable poem in the English language."

WINTER: MY SECRET (Page 64)

This was at first named *Nonsense;* but, if there is method in some madness, there may be nous in some nonsense. — W. M. R.

MAUDE CLARE (Page 66)

This poem was originally much longer than it is now. It numbered forty-three stanzas or thereabouts (there is a gap in the MS. note-book just before its close). It was first published in *Once a Week*, 5 November 1859, with a design by Millais — far from being among his best. There were then sixteen stanzas — now only twelve. I am not sure that the omission of the opening stanza was an advantage; here it is: —

> The fields were white with lily-buds,
> White gleamed the lilied beck;
> Each mated pigeon plumed the pomp
> Of his metallic neck. — W. M. R.

In all these poems wherein dialogue appears, observe her admirable management of it. Another capital short-story plot, with resolute economy of detail. Here we have the very spirit of the elder balladry. With whom is your sympathy — Maude or Nell? Some cynics doubt the efficacy of the plan in the last stanza.

24. Beck. A brook. This is the common name for a stream in those parts of England that were occupied by the Danes.

32. Note how the punctuation reinforces the meaning.

ADVENT (Page 67)

In the annotated copy of her *Poems* Christina wrote against this one: "Liked, I believe, at East Grinstead" — which one may well credit of the "Wise Virgins" of that establishment. The greater part was set to music for Christina's funeral service at Christ Church, Woburn Square, by the organist, Mr. Lowden. I heard the music sung, and can testify to its beautiful and touching effect. — W. M. R.

Swinburne, who is a vast admirer of my sister, thinks the *Advent* perhaps the noblest of all her poems, and also specially loves the *Passing Away*. — D. G. R.

The first four verses dimly suggest Tennyson's delicate *St. Agnes' Eve.*

5. *Watchman, what of the Night.* See *Isaiah* xxi. 11.

UP-HILL (Page 69)

This was, I believe, the first poem by Christina which excited marked attention; it was published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for February 1861, and was at once accepted by poetical readers as an observable thing. The like had, in its small degree, been the case with the verses printed in *The Germ;* but then *The Germ* had next to no circulation. — W. M. R.

Compare Swinburne's *The Pilgrims.*

AT HOME (Page 70)

Was originally called *After the Picnic*, and was written (as a pencil note by the authoress says) "after a Newcastle picnic," which must, no doubt, have been held in company with the Bell Scotts. This, however, was a trivial title, to which my brother raised some objection. He considered this to be about the best of all Christina's poems, and was not (I conceive) far wrong, though there are others equally good. It will be perceived that 29 June 1858 was a red-letter day in Christina's poetic calendar. She produced on that day (or else she simply completed) *Up-hill*, *At Home*, and the ensuing *To-day and To-morrow*, which, though left unpublished during her lifetime, appears to me only a trifle less masterly than the other two. She illustrated *At Home* with two coloured designs, which, inefficiently done as they are, carry a certain imaginative suggestion with them. No. 1 shows the blanched form of the ghost in a sky lit with cresset flames. On one side the sky is bright blue, the flames golden; on the other side, dark twilight grey, and the flames red. No. 2 is the globe of the earth, rudely lined for latitude and longitude. The equator divides it into a green northern and grey-purple southern hemisphere. Over the former flare sunbeams in a blue sky; below the latter the firmament is dimly dark, and the pallid moon grey towards extinction. — W. M. R.

The best of all your things, I think, is *When I was dead my Spirit turned.* Might it not be called *At Home?* I shall give it at once to Macmillan. — D. G. R.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW (Page 71)

4. A suggestion of Browning's quintessential moments, *i.e.* moments of the highest importance in one's experience: consult his *Christina*, and *By the Fireside.*

25. Is this verse offensive?

Is so violent a contrast an indication of so-called pessimism? The poem might be purely objective, dramatic, might it not? Surely the poem need not be interpreted as a personal wail. No more need the last stanza of *At Home* identify the spirit with our poet as assured that she shall be swiftly forgotten.

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD (Page 72)

The authoress seems to have combined in this impassioned poem something of the idea of an Héloïse and Abélard with something of the idea of a Juliet and Romeo. The opening lines, "There's blood between us, etc., clearly point to a family feud, as of the Capulets and Montagues; but it is difficult to believe that the passage beginning "A spirit with transfigured face" would have been introduced unless the writer had had in her mind some personage, such as Abélard, of exceptionally subtle and searching intellect. It may be observed moreover that (as with the letters of Héloïse to Abélard) this seems to be intended for a written outpouring, not a spoken one: see the line on p. 342, "I cannot write the words I said." — W. M. R.

A very splendid piece of feminine ascetic passion is *The Convent Threshold.* — D. G. R.

That thought so moving, feeling so urgent, as the thought and feeling of her *Convent Threshold*, are communicated, are uttered alive, proves her an artist. . . . In this poem — it is impossible not to dwell on such a masterpiece — without imagery; without beauty, except that which is inevitable (and what beauty is more costly?); without grace of impassioned poetry; without music, except the ultimate music of the communicating word, she utters that immortal song of love and that cry of more than earthly fear; a song of penitence for love that yet praises love more fervently than would a chorus hymeneal: —

To-day, while it is called to-day, etc.

— Mrs. Meynell.

3. Consult *Revelation* iv. 6; xv. 2. At a single sitting read the whole of this wonderful book, and feel the noble dignity of its English. If you would command the resources of our great language, give your days and nights not less to Addison, but more to the Bible.

31. How do you construe this verse? This section is a good picture of the "primrose path of dalliance."

82. Recall the majestic beauty of *Job* xxxviii. 7.

87. Clomb. For a satisfactory exposition of poetic diction consult Chapter VI, Genung's *Working Principles of Rhetoric.*

105 ff. Do you think men and women will ever accept this truth? You will recall *The Ancient Mariner*, the germ of which may be found in *Religious Musings.*

As a final comment let us read the last stanza of Browning's *Apparent Failure:* —

> It's wiser being good than bad;
> It's safer being meek than fierce;
> It's fitter being sane than mad.
> My own hope is, a sun will pierce
> The thickest cloud earth ever stretched;
> That, after Last, returns the First,
> Though a wide compass round be fetched,
> That which began best, can't end worst,
> Nor what God blessed once, prove accurst.

YET A LITTLE WHILE (Page 77)

Stanzas 3, 4, 7, and 8 are used, with modifications, in other poems; the first pair in *Vanity of Vanities*, and the second pair in the opening lyric of *Divers Worlds, Time and Eternity.* Nevertheless I have thought it undesirable to cut them out of the present poem. — W. M. R.

See p. 210 for a poem of identical title, and similar tone.

2. Explain, and apply to the author.

5. Which is the (better) singer, the female or the male bird?

19-24. Here, like Holofernes, she "something affects the letter."

In all these religious musings about the future, our poet is really taking the theoretical Christian attitude. Is she not? Sang the Psalmist: "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."

The poetic beauty is as striking as the spontaneity.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME (Page 78)

I have always regarded this poem as one of my sister's most manifest masterpieces; though it is true that the opening of it would perhaps not have taken its present form had it not been for

the precedent of Tennyson's *Palace of Art*. In this respect resemblances are obvious; but divergencies also are of the very essence of the poem. When a question arose as to publishing it (in the *Goblin Market* volume) my brother called attention to the point, penciling on the MS. note-book, "This is so good it cannot be omitted; but could not something be done to make it less like *Palace of Art?*" Christina, however, did nothing at all in that direction; she substituted the present title for the original one, *Sorrow not as those who have no hope*. The essence of the poem is the severance of a human heart from the joys and the loves of earth, to centre in the joys and the loves of heaven; that it is in part a personal utterance is a fact too plain to need exposition. The three poems which in date immediately precede *From House to Home* are *The Love of Christ which passeth Knowledge*, *A Shadow of Dorothea*, and *By the Sea* (or rather a more personal and melancholy lyric poem from which *By the Sea* is extracted); next after *From House to Home* comes *New Year's Eve*. If the reader cares to turn to these several poems, he will see in all of them evidence of a spirit sorely wrung, and clinging for dear life to a hope not of this world. As elucidating this phase of feeling, so prominent in many of Christina Rossetti's poems, I may refer to the *Memoir*, p. lii. — W. M. R.

One of the finest and most sustained poems in the volume is entitled *From House to Home*. There is a sadness in it which perhaps reminds us of *The House of Sin*, or *The Dream of Fair Women*, but it is distinctly itself in intuition and art; and, indeed, is a very true poem, descriptive of that perfection which comes by suffering. — *Littell's Living Age*, Vol. LXXIV.

Is the stanza that of *The Palace of Art?* How does it differ? Point out striking differences in the two poems.

17. Look up derivation and meaning. Note the loving protection of bird and beast.

77. How swiftly in the preceding stanzas the speaker's agreeable prophecies are belied. Observe now that nature sympathizes with her bitterness of heart — apparently. This misinterpretation of nature Ruskin calls "the pathetic fallacy"; perhaps more justly, Holmes terms it "sympathetic illusion." Another name is subjective description or dramatic background. Recall *Paradise Lost* when Eve and Adam successively disobey, and *Macbeth* the night of the murder of Duncan.

106. The following verses suggest again *The Ancient Mariner*.

128. Do you catch even a faint glimpse of the meaning of this beautiful verse? To most of us, doubtless, mystic and mysticism signify little more than misty and mist.

218. From *Isaiah* lxi. 3, "To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

L. E. L. (Page 87)

This poem was at first entitled *Spring*, and a note was put to the title, "*L. E. L.* by E. B. B." The note must refer to Mrs. Browning's poem named *L. E. L.'s Last Question;* but it is not entirely clear what relation Christina meant to indicate between that poem and her own *Spring*. Apparently she relied either upon L. E. L.'s phrase, which was, "Do you think of me as I think of you?" — or else upon a phrase occurring in Mrs. Browning's lyric, "One thirsty for a little love." It will be clear to most readers that Christina's poem *Spring* relates to herself, and not at all to the poetess L. E. L. (Letitia Elizabeth Landon). I suppose that, when the publishing-stage came on, Christina preferred to retire behind a cloud, and so renamed the poem *L. E. L.*, as if it were intended to express emotions proper to that now perhaps unduly forgotten poetess. The poem, as it stands in my sister's MS. note-book, has lines 1 and 3 of each stanza unrhymed, and she has pencilled a note thus: "Gabriel fitted the double rhymes as printed, with a brotherly request that I would use them"; and elsewhere she adds, "greatly improving the piece." In other respects the printed *L. E. L.* is nearly identical with the MS. *Spring*. — W. M. R.

Miss Landon (1802–1839) produced several volumes of both prose and verse, the best of the latter of which was perhaps *The Improvisatrice*. In 1838, she married George Maclean, and the next year died, it is supposed, from an overdose of prussic acid.

Dream Love, *An End*, *L. E. L.*, *A Birthday*, *An Apple Gathering*, may be cited as examples of the perfect lyric, and there are many others. — Garnett.

Is there a repetend in this poem? Distinguish refrain from repetend. Mention poets fond of these devices — modern poets — since the elder ballad.

15. Is the grammar satisfactory? Compare l. 10 of Mrs. Browning's *The Deserted Garden*, "For no one entered there but I;" and l. 18 of Tennyson's *Supposed Confessions of a Second-Rate Sensitive Mind*, "And what is left to me, but Thou?" Which is the more defensible — but or save followed by the nominative?

GOBLIN MARKET (Page 88)

The title was suggested by Gabriel.

The original title of this poem was *A Peep at the Goblins — To M. F. R. — i.e.* Maria Francesca Rossetti. I have more than once heard Christina say that she did not mean anything profound by this fairy tale — it is not a moral apologue consistently carried out in detail. Still the incidents are such as to be at any rate suggestive, and different minds may be likely to read different messages into them. I find at times that people do not see the central point of the story, such as the authoress intended it: and she has expressed it, too, but perhaps not with due emphasis. The foundation of the narrative is this: That the goblins tempt women to eat their luscious but uncanny fruits; that a first taste produces a rabid craving for a second taste; but that the second taste is never accorded, and, in default of it, the woman pines away and dies. Then comes the central point: Laura having tasted the fruits once, and being at death's door through inability to get a second taste, her sister Lizzie determines to save her at all hazards; so she goes to the goblins, refuses to eat their fruits, and beguiles them into forcing the fruits upon her with so much insistency that her face is all smeared and steeped with the juices; she gets Laura to kiss and suck these juices off her face, and Laura, having thus obtained the otherwise impossible second taste, rapidly recovers. — This poem was skilfully translated into Italian by our cousin, Teodorico Pietrocola-Rossetti, under the title of *Il Mercato de' Folletti*, and was published in Florence (Pellas) in 1867. A cantata was made of the English words towards 1872 by Mr. Emanuel Aguilar.

2. **Maids heard the Goblins cry.** — Various designations are given to the goblins; they are "goblin men, little men, merchant men, fruit-merchant men." They certainly had tails, for one merchant was "whisk-tailed," and they went "lashing their tails" when baffled. Then there is the passage, "One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry," etc. The authoress does not appear to represent her goblins as having the actual configuration of brute animals; it was Dante Rossetti who did that in his illustration to the poem (he allows human hands, however). I possess a copy of the *Goblin Market* volume, 1862, with marginal water-colour sketches by Christina — extending up to the poem *Spring* on p. 51 of that volume, but not farther. She draws several of the goblins, — all very slim agile figures in a close-fitting garb of blue; their faces, hands, and feet are sometimes human, sometimes brute-

like, but of a scarcely definable type. The only exception is the "parrot-voiced" goblin who cried "Pretty goblin." He is a true parrot (such as Christina could draw one). There are thirty-five such illustrations to *Goblin Market* — the simplest, as of fruit-branches, being the prettiest. When the special edition of *Goblin Market*, with designs by Mr. Laurence Housman, came out in 1893, Christina, although aware that the drawings possess superior artistic merit (a point, however, as to which she was no *judge*), did not exactly take to them as carrying out her own notion of her own goblins. — W. M. R.

Her *Goblin Market* is original in conception, style, and structure, as imaginative as *The Ancient Mariner*, and comparable only to Shakespeare for the insight shown into unhuman and yet spiritual natures. — GARNETT.

It is one of the very few purely fantastic poems of recent times which have really kept up the old tradition of humoresque literature. Its witty and fantastic conception is embroidered with fancies, descriptions, peals of laughing music, which clothe it as a queer Japanese figure may be clothed with brocade, so that the entire effect at last is beautiful and harmonious without ever having ceased to be grotesque. I confess that while I dimly perceive the underlying theme to be a didactic one, and nothing less than the sacrifice of self by a sister to recuperate a sister's virtue, I cannot follow the parable through all its delicious episodes. Like a Japanese work of art, again, one perceives the genuine intention, and one is satisfied with the beauty of all the detail, without comprehending or wishing to comprehend every part of the execution. For instance, the wonderful scene in which Lizzie sits beleaguered by the goblins, and receives with hard-shut mouth all the syrups that they squeeze against her skin — this from the point of view of poetry is perfect, and needs no apology or commentary; but its place in the parable it would, surely, be extremely hard to find. It is, therefore, astonishing to me that the general public, that strange and unaccountable entity, has chosen to prefer *Goblin Market*, which we might conceive to be written for poets alone, to *The Prince's Progress*, where the parable and the teaching are as clear as noonday. — GOSSE.

Goblin Market — we know not how to describe or characterize it — is as wild as if some vision of Grimm, or Tieck, or Andersen had found its way to the author's eyes and verse; it is a perfect little fairy gem; in verse remarkably fresh and free, and happily

in unison. Very likely some readers will say, What is it all about? To which we can make very slight reply; indeed there is no replying when we are asked what is the meaning of Goblin Stories; it rings and tinkles in its short and rapid syllables like the fanciful melody of fairy bells, or the hurried and mystic tramp of goblin men; but the thing, perfect as it seems in itself, is for that very reason indissoluble. — *Littell's Living Age*, Vol. LXXIV.

The only point in which Christina Rossetti's imagery may be held to be tropical is in the matters of fruit. In *Goblin Market*, in the *Pageant of the Months*, even in such a poem as the *Apple Gathering*, and in many other poems, she seems to revel in descriptions of fruit, which the harsh apples and half-baked plums of English gardens can hardly have suggested. Keats is the only other English poet who had the same sensuous delight in the pulpy juiciness of summer fruit. It will be found, I think, that in the majority of English poets fruit is quite as often typical of immaturity and acidity as of cooling and delight.

This leads us to speak of another region which Christina Rossetti trod with an eager familiarity — the land of dreams and visions. With the exception of Coleridge, who in his three great poems moved in that difficult and turbid air with so proud a freedom, it may be said that no English poet, except Christina and her brother and James Thomson, ever successfully attempted such work. . . .

— A. C. Benson.

22. Bullaces. Fruit of "a plum-tree from Asia Minor and southern Europe." In l. 24, bilberry is the European whortleberry, which corresponds to huckleberry and blueberry. In l. 27, barberries are bright red berries that grow wild in New England.

75. Wombat. An Australian brute said to look like a little bear. It is, like the kangaroo, marsupial, *i.e.* of the kind that carry young in a pouch. In his place in 16 Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, Gabriel had among other pets a wombat.

76. Ratel. Pronounced *raytel:* this is not so much a little rat as it seems; it is a honey-badger.

258. Succous. Apparently an error for succose, from Lat. *suc(c)us*, sap, juice.

336. A strong evidence of inventive and narrative faculty. Rapidly, almost vehemently, the story moves to its conclusion; no time is wasted in getting a start, and description is suggestive. The verses are short, tripping, hurrying. Even the repetend in ll. 317–319 is not marking time, but gives the effect of rapid movement. Repose we might expect in the beautiful domestic scene at

the close, but no concession is made to that fine principle of art. We move breathlessly from beginning to end.

Though there is little overt description, the poem is highly picturesque. Eery imaginings give us the very spirit of faery, "out of space, out of time," everywhere, anywhere, nowhere. To this poet's penetrating eye the "open secret" is indeed patent.

MIRAGE (Page 105)

Autobiographical or not, this poem voices a cry from the heart. If still she laments Collinson, it is a tribute to her constancy. The last stanza is too true of herself — Life, and the world and her own self were changed, and for a dream's sake.

PASSING AWAY (Page 106)

Originally entitled *The Knell of the Year*, and constituting the third of *Old and New Year Ditties*. The title given above is the more familiar, and indeed is generally used.

I have always regarded this as the very summit and mountain-top of Christina's work. I will not say, nor indeed think, that nothing besides of hers is equal to it; but I venture to hold that, while she never wrote anything to transcend it in its own line, neither did any one else. The poem depends for its effect on nought save its feeling, sense, and sound; for the verses avoid regularity of the ordinary kind, and there is but one single rhyme throughout. The note is essentially one of triumph, though of triumph through the very grievousness of experience past and present. The year 1860 (besides being the year of Dante Gabriel's marriage) was that in which Christina, a few days before she wrote *The Knell*, attained the age of thirty, and her thoughts as to the transit of years may have been more than ordinarily solemn. Her reference to her having "won neither laurel nor bay" has also its interest. The bay began sprouting soon afterwards, with the appearance, in *Macmillan's Magazine* for February 1861, of the poem *Up-hill*, which at once commanded a considerable share of public attention. It is quite possible that Christina — the most modest of poets, but by no means wanting in the self-consciousness of poetic faculty — thought in 1860 that the bay had been kept waiting quite long enough; and it is a fact that, between 24 July 1860, the date of *The Lambs of Westmoreland*, and 23 March 1861,

the date of *Easter Even*, she wrote no verse whatever except this *Knell of the Year*. — W. M. R.

Again, 10 August, 1883, William wrote to his sister: See *Athenæum* of 4 Aug. . . . something about a musical setting of your *Passing Away* — your chef d'œuvre, and the finest sacred poem (me judice) in the language. It is susceptible of an astonishing range and stress of musical expression supposing only the musician to have this at command.

To this Christina replied: Thank-you for telling me what greatly pleases me, that you so much like *Passing Away*, which also I rate high among the works of that author!

Read *Solomon's Song*. The last stanza of the poem takes its inspiration directly from the second chapter, verses ten to thirteen.

Unlike many of his craft, Mr. Swinburne, who had just read Miss Rossetti's *Goblin Market, and Other Poems*, recently published, showed the most generous enthusiasm for the work of his fellow-poet, and, after paying her a signal tribute, he asked Howell if he happened to have the volume in the house. Fortunately this proved to be the case, and Mr. Swinburne, taking up the book, rapidly turned over the pages, evidently in search of some favorite poem. In vain I tried to conjecture what his choice was going to be. The volume, as readers of Miss Rossetti are aware, concludes with a series of devotional pieces which, having regard to the completion of Mr. Swinburne's own poems at that time, would, I thought, be the last to attract him, strongly at any rate. But I was mistaken. His quest stopped almost at the end of the book, and without more ado he straightway proceeded to read aloud that singularly beautiful but profoundly devotional paraphrase, partly derived from *Solomon's Song*, which begins with "Passing away saith the world, passing away." The particular meter and impressive monotony of rhyme (every line in the piece is rhymed to the opening one) seemed peculiarly to lend themselves to Mr. Swinburne's measured lilt of intonation, and then realized for the first time the almost magical effect which Tennyson's similar method of reading was wont to exercise over his hearers. When Mr. Swinburne had finished, he put the book down with a vehement gesture, but only for an instant. After a moment's pause, he took it up again, and a second time read the poem aloud with even greater expression than before. He said, as he closed the book, "that's one of the finest things ever written!" — *Personalia*, by Sigma, Doubleday, Page and Company.

PROMISES LIKE PIE-CRUST (Page 107)

Miss Rossetti was sometimes infelicitous in her titles. It is not known whether Rossetti approved this; he often suggested changes, perhaps not always happily. The poem itself, however, is not so prosaic. Compare Browning's *A Woman's Last Word.*

WIFE TO HUSBAND (Page 107)

I am not aware that this poem has any individual application. If any, it might perhaps be to my brother's wife, whose constant and severe ill-health permitted no expectation of her living long. Her death took place in February 1862. — W. M. R.

Though different in theme, Browning's *Any Wife to Any Husband*, will be found an interesting comparison. Even here, perhaps, if we interpreted the unexpressed, the similarity would be greater.

May there be said to be two burdens or refrains?

BETTER SO (Page 109)

This poem consisted at first of six stanzas. The 3d, 4th, and 6th, were extracted by my sister, and, with some modification of diction and metre, were published in *Time Flies*, and in the *Verses* of 1893. The remaining three stanzas seem to me to be of much the same degree of merit; they are complete enough in themselves, so I publish them here. It seems probable that the whole poem was written upon the death of some cherished friend; I do not remember who it was. The date is not consistent with any death in our own family. The next poem relates of course to the decease of the Prince Consort. It might be possible (not, I think, probable) to suppose that Christina wrote the present lines as an appropriate utterance for *Our Widowed Queen.* The Prince indeed died on 14 (not 13) December, but on the 13th his death was clearly anticipated. — W. M. R.

A ROYAL PRINCESS (Page 109)

This poem was first printed in 1863, in a small volume named *Poems: an Offering to Lancashire*, which was got up "for the relief of distress in the cotton-districts," *i.e.* the "Cotton Fam-

ine" consequent upon the civil war in the United States. The volume contained contributions by other writers as well — George MacDonald, Allingham, Mary Howitt, Isa Craig, Lord Houghton, Locker-Lampson, Dante Rossetti, etc. The first printed form of the poem contains some variants from the present form, which is the same as in the *Prince's Progress* volume. It is rather singular that Christina should have written in October 1861, before any suggestion of the Cotton Famine began, a poem which, when she was soon afterwards asked to contribute something for this object, came in so markedly appropriate. — W. M. R.

The *Royal Princess* has a good deal of it [falsetto muscularity, already referred to under *The Lowest Room* (p. 46) and *No, thank you, John*] unluckily, but then that poem is too good to omit.
— D. G. R.

35. To the genuine soul, creature comforts, however splendid, fail to give contentment unless fellowmen can share them. The princess, like the soul in *The Palace of Art*, must go out to those less happily conditioned. So far democratic it were inhuman not to be.

56. These verses following present a state of things not unlike the French Revolution ; but how different the princess from Marie Antoinette.

99. Almost the supreme test.

ON THE WING (Page 114)

Possibly an allusion to Cayley, with whom she fell in love at perhaps this time. The sonnet is pathetically tender. Might the last verse have significance beyond a touch of realism ?

SEASONS (Page 115)

These lines show a shrinking from winter time, apparent in several other compositions. Italian blood may partly account for this ; yet, after all, there is plenty of beauty in an ordinary winter, English or other, and the sensations of an invalid (troubled up to early middle age with many symptoms which seemed to point toward consumption) may have had to do with the feeling. — W. M. R.

JUNE (Page 116)

The favorite month of Lowell, Bryant, Poe, etc. You, of course, remember Bryant's poem entitled *June*, and Lowell's lilting lines in *The Vision of Sir Launfal*.

1. Do you know Wordsworth's poems on this bird, especially "O blithe Newcomer"?

In this poem our poet almost breaks into rapture.

MAIDEN SONG (Page 117)

This simple light-hearted poem — a kind of cross between the tone of a fairy-tale and that of a nursery-song, each of them sweetened into poetry — was deservedly something of a favorite with its authoress. — W. M. R.

Lady Waterford . . . told me that Mr. Gladstone had repeated the poem to them by heart. — D. G. R.

This poem is almost incomparable for its charming nursery metre and simple narrative. Of the nursery classic, too, there is more than faint suggestion. Those familiar with *Sing-Song* expect such a triumph.

Observe in the second and other stanzas the fine indirect description — suggestion by effects. The Cinderella of the group has all the magic of Orpheus.

Do not fail to note the grateful pastoral quality. Do you regard Pope's *Pastorals* as successful? Mention the classic examples of pastoral work, ancient or modern.

Point out the utilization of the many poetic traits.

SOMEWHERE OR OTHER (Page 124)

A beautiful lyric cry, though not a personal note. She *had* seen the face and heard the voice.

A FARM WALK (Page 124)

Do you catch the sweet breath of kine in this bucolic pasture? The poem is as winsome as the maid; it possesses all the unschooled grace of Whittier.

SONGS IN A CORNFIELD (Page 127)

In this pathetic poem the names of the singers were at first Lettice, Marian, May, and Janet. Afterwards Marian was turned into Rachel, and Janet into Marian. The original Marian (now Rachel) sang the second song; but this was a different lyric — the one which now forms No. 1 in *Twilight Night*. Also there were a dozen concluding lines to the whole poem, left out in printing. *Songs in a Cornfield* was set to music by Sir G. A. Macfarren as a cantata, which was performed more than once. To me the music appeared truly beautiful; but I believe it did not take much with the public, perhaps because of its extremely melancholy tone at the close. I sometimes fancied that, to avoid this objection, a judicious move would have been to place the swallow-song last in the cantata. — W. M. R.

For one who knows nature so slightly at first hand, these details are very realistic. The title is alluring, the pictures natural and agreeable, and the measure embodies native wood-notes wild in a highly inartificial way.

The end suggests the conclusion of *The Prince's Progress*.

JESSIE CAMERON (Page 132)

Is the tragedy due to entirely natural causes? Had the poem best end with line 96? Why?

59. Unked. Strange, dreary, uncouth.

AMOR MUNDI (Page 135)

This justly celebrated poem appeared first in *The Shilling Magazine*, with a fine illustration by Mr. Frederick Sandys. It has also been made the subject of an oil-picture by Mr. Edward Hughes. Mr. Sandys showed a group of two lovers — the man guitar-playing and singing, the woman pleasing herself with a hand mirror. I do not perceive, however, that such was exactly the authoress's intention. I take it that both her personages are female: one of them a woman, the other the World in feminine shape. The first speaker is the woman, who inquires of the World whither she is going: it is the World who is figured with "lovelocks," and as "dear to doat on," and who is afterwards pronounced "false and fleetest." The reader can take or reject this opinion as he likes,

for I do not remember ever hearing the point settled by Christina. In her arrangement of her poems when collected, she put *Up-hill* next after *Amor Mundi;* a significant juxtaposition, done no doubt with intention. That she thought well of the latter may easily be conjectured; none the less I find in one of her editions the following note on the poem: "Gabriel remarked very truly, a reminiscence of *The Demon Lover.*" This remark would refer more directly to stanza 3. — W. M. R.

To-day I have been looking through [your new volume of *Poems*] with the same intense sympathy which your work always excites in me. . . . *Amor Mundi* is one of your choicest masterpieces.
— D. G. R.

Perhaps for strength both of subject and of treatment, Christina Rossetti's masterpiece is *Amor Mundi.* Here we get a lesson of human life expressed, not didactically, but in a concrete form of unsurpassable strength, harmony, and concision.
— WATTS[-DUNTON].

. . . *Amor Mundi* . . . takes rank as one of the most solemn, imaginative, and powerful lyrics on a purely religious subject ever printed in England. — GOSSE.

THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS (PAGE 136)

The original nucleus of this poem is the dirge-song at its close — "Too late for love, too late for joy," etc. This was written in 1861, and entitled *The Prince who arrived too late.* When Christina Rossetti was looking up, in 1865, the material for a fresh poetical volume, it was, I believe, my brother who suggested to her to turn the dirge into a narrative poem of some length. She adopted the suggestion — almost the only instance in which she wrote anything so as to meet directly the views of another person.
— W. M. R.

The prince is a handsome, lazy fellow, who sets out late upon his pilgrimage, loiters in bad company by the way, is decoyed by light loves, and the hope of life, and the desire of wealth, and reaches his destined bride at last, only to find her dead. This is an obvious moral, but it is adorned with verse of the very highest romantic beauty. Every claim which criticism has to make for the singular merit of Miss Rossetti might be substantiated from this little-known romance. — GOSSE.

Fine as is the *Prince's Progress*, for instance (and it would be hard to find its superior in regard to poetic material in the whole compass of Victorian poetry), the number of ragged lines the reader has to encounter weighs upon him and distresses him until, indeed, the conclusion is reached: then the passion and the pathos of the subject cause the poem to rise upon billows of true rhythm.

— Watts[-Dunton].

Here more is meant than meets the ear? Interpret the beautiful parable. Incidentally, you might make clear the difference between allegory, parable, and symbolism.

55. Contrast the following incident with that of *A Farm Walk*, p. 124.

110. Réveillée. Is this the familiar word? Consult Skeat's or a large dictionary.

120. Effective is the contrast here not only in landscape but also in character. The Prince is strong of limb and of purpose weak; whereas the veriest atomy, whether or not worthily employed, was mighty of will in his indefatigable pursuit.

481. This is the nucleus of the romantic narrative. Here Miss Rossetti reversed her practice: she expanded rather than reduced the story. Beautiful as is the dirge alone, it necessarily lacks the body and the distinction of the more circumstantial account. It is Hebraic in its imagery and allusion, and Greek in its haunting beauty. As an exercise in elaboration it is highly worthy of study.

Is there any development in the Prince's character?

EN ROUTE (Page 154)

Under this heading I find three pieces in MS. which seem to have little connection one with the other. Presumably they were all written while my sister, along with my mother and myself, was making a flying visit to North Italy (through France and Switzerland). She was never there at any other time. The passionate delight in Italy to which *En Route* bears witness suggests that she was almost an alien — or, like her father, an exile — in the North. She never perhaps wrote anything better. I can remember the intense relief and pleasure with which she saw lovable Italian faces and heard musical Italian speech at Bellinzona after the somewhat hard and nipped quality of the German Swiss. I now give only one piece under the name *En Route*. The first piece and the third were used by my sister in her poem named *An Immurata Sister*.

— W. M. R.

3. Brother. Should you prefer the plural here, and in Sister of the next verse? Why?

5. Another. For the sake of the rhyme?

ENRICA (Page 155)

This poem was first published, under the name of *An English Drawing-room*, in a selection entitled *Picture Posies, Poems chiefly by Living Authors*, 1874, with an illustration by Houghton. I remember perfectly well the lady to whom the verses refer — an interesting person, anything but kindly treated by fate. She was Signora Enrica Barile; her husband had taken the fancy of altering his name to Filopanti, so she was called Signora Filopanti. Her husband (whom I never saw) had some pretensions as an Italian patriot, an adherent of Mazzini and Garibaldi — the latter indeed, in his *Memoirs*, has spoken of him very highly. He also dabbled in the doctrine of metempsychosis, and would have it that Dante and Beatrice were reincarnated in himself and his wife. The general love of humankind which impelled him to rename himself as Filopanti was, unfortunately, unpropitious to a normal affection for his spouse; so after a while he gave her notice that she had better look out for some separate means of subsistence. She came to London — a very agreeable, bright-natured lady, still perhaps under thirty, personable and comely, and not far from handsome — of course, as the poem shows, eminently Italian in character and manner. It was through Mrs. Bell Scott that our family knew her. Signora Filopanti was the lady who, upon Garibaldi's visit to London in 1864, delivered a brief and extemporized harangue to him in public, as he stood before a vast concourse *en route* from the railway station to the heart of London. The Signora tried to establish a teaching connection in London, with only indifferent success. After a time she left, and I heard little or nothing further about her until 1902; she was then living, and in Italy. Here, as in the preceding piece, *En Route*, we can discern the strong Italian sympathies and affinities of Christina.

— W. M. R.

The metre is that of what great poem?

ITALIA, IO TI SALUTO (Page 157)

Miss Rossetti's resignation, cheerful submission, sense of duty, is not the least beautiful thing in this beautiful poem. Where her work is, there she will work.

AUTUMN VIOLETS (Page 159)

Observe how the sestette complements the octave; the first eight verses develop "violets for the spring"; the last six verses, "love for youth."

BY WAY OF REMEMBRANCE (Page 159)

This short sonnet-sequence emits the perfume of the crushed violet. How truly and nobly Miss Rossetti loved Cayley emerges from such superlative poetry. To such fine souls love is not fruition — it is its own exceeding great reward.

AN ECHO FROM WILLOW-WOOD (Page 161)

The title indicates that this sonnet by Christina is based on those sonnets by our brother, named *Willow-wood*, which were first published in 1869. Christina's sonnet may possibly be intended to refer to the love and marriage of my brother and Miss Siddal, and to her early death in 1862; or it may (which I think far more probable) be intended for a wholly different train of events. The verses were printed in *The Magazine of Art*, with an illustration by Mr. C. Ricketts. This was in 1890; but, from the association of the sonnet with *Willow-wood*, I give conjecturally the date "*circa* 1870." — W. M. R.

THE GERMAN-FRENCH CAMPAIGN (Page 162)

The notice prefixed by the authoress to these two poems is no doubt correct in saying that they were not intended to express "political bias." It is none the less true that she had incomparably more general and native sympathy with the French nationality than with the German. — W. M. R.

The two poems on the Franco-Prussian War [are] very noble — particularly the second, which is, I dare say, the best thing said in verse on the subject. . . . The first of the two poems seems to me just a little echoish of the Barrett-Browning style — fine as the verses and genuine as the motive must be plainly discerned to be. Here, however, it is only in cadence that I seem to notice something of the kind. — D. G. R.

Again: In my own view the greatest of all her poems is that on France after the siege — *To-day for Me.* — D. G. R.

A faithful reader of Miss Rossetti will become familiar with the Bible. Follow up the allusions here. The reign of peace is eloquently invoked.

VENUS'S LOOKING-GLASS (Page 165)

Mr. Cayley sent to my sister a short MS. poem named *The Birth of Venus*, and soon afterwards, 13 October 1872, another shorter poem on the same argument. Upon the latter poem she wrote the following note: "The longer of these two poems was sent me first. Then I wrote one which the second rebuts. At last I wound up by my sonnet *Venus's Looking-glass.*" In a copy of her collected *Poems*, 1875, there is also the following note: "Perhaps 'Love-in-Idleness' would be a better title, with an eye to the next one" — *i.e.* to *Love Lies Bleeding.* — W. M. R.

. . . The Venus's sonnet and the one following [are] most exquisite. — D. G. R.

No touch here of a minor strain; it is a frank acceptance of the pagan myth, a delicate creation set to exquisite music.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING (Page 166)

As Christina associated this sonnet with the preceding one, *Venus's Looking-glass*, I have kept them together, dating the second "*circa* 1872." All that I really know of its date, however, is that it got published in 1875. — W. M. R.

Included by Sharp in his *Sonnets of this Century.*

SING-SONG (Page 166)

This is the happy title given by Mother Rossetti to these lyrics. While some of them are reminders of Mother Goose, others are worthy of our poet at her best, even though she is among the first as a lyrist. He who neglects these artless spontaneities will fail to get a complete idea of Miss Rossetti's indefinable quality of charm. Elsewhere her simplicity may be nobler; more delightful it cannot be.

A GREEN CORNFIELD (Page 205)

Read Shelley's *To a Skylark.*

A BRIDE SONG (Page 206)

A first fine careless rapture. What kind of description is that of the last stanza? You will note that the lyrical state of the speaker is suggested for the beauty of nature.

CONFLUENTS (Page 208)

Confluents [is] lovely and penetrating in its cadence. — D. G. R.

But for the absence of capitals for *thee*, etc., this should seem a mystic utterance, the heart's outpouring of the devotee. It cannot allude to Maria Rossetti, who died 24 November, 1876; it might be another reference to Cayley.

BIRD RAPTURES (Page 209)

Not quite habitually, but all too prevailingly, the pensive subdued the cheerful woman; the nightingale was then preferred to the lark.

VALENTINES TO MY MOTHER (Page 209)

I am probably not alone in considering these as very charming compositions of their simple intimate kind. Christina left a pencilled note about them thus: "These Valentines had their origin from my dearest mother's remarking that she had never received one. I, her C. G. R., ever after supplied one on the day; and (so far as I recollect) it was a surprise every time, she having forgotten all about it in the interim." Our mother was born in April 1800, so she was nearly seventy-six when the first Valentine was written; she died in April 1886. — W. M. R.

YET A LITTLE WHILE (Page 210)

Compare p. 77. Miss Rossetti rather trusted than hoped. Not all would accept the definition of *hope* in ll. 11 and 12.

DE PROFUNDIS (Page 211)

Out of the depths she cried.

Though David was temporarily in greater depths, he was oftener on spiritual heights.

But all his heart was one desire,
Nor so in vain.

THE MONTHS: A PAGEANT (Page 212)

This *Pageant*, which was written at Seaford, has been acted more than once, at any rate in girls' schools. I remember one instance reported from America not long before the authoress's death. Indeed, this was partly in her view in writing the poem.

— W. M. R.

MONNA INNOMINATA (Page 226)

To any one to whom it was granted to be behind the scenes of Christina Rossetti's life — and to how few was this granted — it is not merely probable but certain that this "sonnet of sonnets" was a personal utterance — an intensely personal one. The introductory prose-note, about "many a lady sharing her lover's poetic aptitude," etc., is a blind — not an untruthful blind, for it alleges nothing that is not reasonable, and on the surface correct, but still a blind interposed to draw off attention from the writer in her proper person.

SONNET ONE (Page 227)

Some English readers may like to see the mottoes of this sonnet and of its successors anglicized. I give them so here; the reader will observe for himself that in every instance the first sentence comes from Dante, and the second from Petrarca: 1. The day that they have said adieu to their sweet friends. Love, with how great a stress dost thou vanquish me to-day! — 2. It was already the hour which turns back the desire. I recur to the time when I first saw thee. — 3. Oh shades, empty save in semblance! An imaginary guide conducts her. — 4. A small spark fosters a great flame. Every other thing, every thought, goes off, and love alone remains there with you. — 5. Love, who exempts no loved one from loving. Love led me into such joyous hope. — 6. Now canst thou comprehend the quantity of the love which glows in me towards thee.

I do not choose that Love should release me from such a tie. — 7. Here always Spring and every fruit. Conversing with me, and I with him. — 8. As if he were to say to God, "I care for nought else." I hope to find pity, and not only pardon. — 9. O dignified and pure conscience! Spirit more lit with burning virtues. — 10. With better course and with better star. Life flees, and stays not an hour. — 11. Come after me, and leave folk to talk. Relating the casualties of our life. — 12. Love, who speaks within my mind. Love comes in the beautiful face of this lady. — 13. And we will direct our eyes to the Primal Love. But I find a burden to which my arms suffice not. — 14. And His will is our peace. Only with these thoughts, with different locks. — W. M. R.

I am much pleased with [Mr. Caine's] *Academy* article, though sorry that he seems to have misapprehended my reference to the *Portuguese Sonnets*. Surely not only what I meant to say but what I do say is, not that the Lady of those sonnets is surpassable, but that a "Donna innominata" by the same hand might well have been unsurpassable. The Lady in question, as she actually stands, I was not regarding as an "innominata" at all, — because the latter type, according to the traditional figures I had in view, is surrounded by unlike circumstances. I rather wonder that no one (so far as I know) ever hit on my semi-historical argument before for such treatment, — it seems to me so full of poetic suggestiveness.

— CHRISTINA to D. G. R.

What she says in her letter — that the speaker in her sonnets was not intended for an "innominata at all" — is curious, and shows (what is every now and then apparent in her utterances) that her mind was conversant with very nice shades of distinction. It is indisputable that the real veritable speaker in those sonnets is Christina herself, giving expression to her love for Charles Cayley: but the prose heading would surely lead any reader to suppose that the *ostensible* speaker is one of those ladies, to whom it adverts, in the days of the troubadours. — W. M. R.

In her book there is a chain of sonnets, well conceived and flowing limpidly, representing the poetical responses of an unhappy *monna innominata* to the lover she may not wed. Curiously enough we are given at this moment, in a little book prepared by Eugene Benson and Miss Fletcher (George Fleming), the actual thing which Miss Rossetti had imagined. The story of Gaspara Stampa is told by Mr. Benson so exquisitely, in such a delightful style and with such perfect sympathy, that we must refer all read-

ers to him for the pleasure of learning how this beautiful Venetian lady of Titian's time vainly loved the lord of Collalto, and poured out her heart to him in sonnets full of music and sorrow and fine womanly nature. . . . It is . . . interesting to compare them with Miss Rossetti's sonnets modeled on early Italian love-literature, the reality with the imitation. The English poetess, sharing the nationality of Gaspara Stampa, also shows something of her quality; but the Venetian lady is less deliberate, more intense and direct. . . .

— *The Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1882.

70. Compare p. 273.
73. Literally fulfilled twice.
155. A supreme test rarely met.

AN OLD-WORLD THICKET (Page 234)

This poem bears a certain analogy to the earlier one, *From House to Home*. I think it sustains the comparison, though pitched in a lower key. The essence of *From House to Home* is unison with the Church Triumphant, through self-abnegation. The essence of the *Old-World Thicket* might be expressed in a quotation from St. Paul: "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." The poem does not, as I read it, relate to the Church Triumphant, nor in a very express form to the Church Militant; rather, at the close of the poem, to the scheme of redemption, and the flock of Christ.

— W. M. R.

A study in black worthy of remark for its tone-keeping. Subjective description or pathetic fallacy is extensive, and enhanced by contrast. Here nature failed in its soothing ministry, but the placid front of the silly sheep was restorative.

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd,
I stand and look at them long and long." — Whitman.

MAIDEN MAY (Page 240)

Are maiden and youth generally so inquisitive about the mystery of things? Read Emerson's *The Sphinx*, and consider the answer. Is there a touch of moralizing?

LATER LIFE: A DOUBLE SONNET OF SONNETS
(Page 244)

The authoress terms this "a double sonnet of sonnets"; and I apprehend that the majority of it must have been written with a definite intention that its various constituent parts should form one whole. Probably, when the general framework was getting into shape, two or three outlying sonnets were pressed into the service.
— W. M. R.

To our taste the Later Life Sonnets are the best part of the book; though they, too, betray faults of execution. — *The Atlantic Monthly*, January, 1882.

TOUCHING "NEVER" (Page 258)

In connection with this poem read Browning's *The Last Ride Together*. It is one of the most beautiful of all his love poems, and in the portrayal of the noble passion his art is consummate.

BRANDONS BOTH (Page 258)

Compare the following: —

Margery

What shall we do with Margery?
  She lies and cries upon her bed,
  All lily-pale from foot to head;
Her heart is sore as sore can be:
Poor guileless shamefaced Margery.

A foolish girl, to love a man
  And let him know she loved him so!
She should have tried a different plan:
  Have loved, but not have let him know:
  Then he perhaps had loved her so.

What can we do with Margery
  Who has no relish for her food?
We'd take her with us to the sea—
  Across the sea — but where's the good?
She'd fret alike on land and sea.

Yes, what the neighbours say is true:
  Girls should not make themselves so cheap.
But now it's done what can we do?
  I hear her moaning in her sleep,
  Moaning and sobbing in her sleep.

I think — and I'm of flesh and blood —
  Were I that man for whom she cares,
  I would not cost her tears and prayers
To leave her just alone like mud,
  Fretting her simple heart with cares.

A year ago she was a child,
  Now she's a woman in her grief:
  The year's now at the falling leaf;
At budding of the leaves she smiled:
Poor foolish harmless foolish child.

It was her own fault? so it was.
  If every own fault found us out,
  Dogged us and snared us round-about,
What comfort should we take because
  Not half our due we thus wrung out?

At any rate the question stands:
  What now to do with Margery,
A weak poor creature on our hands?
  Something we must do: I'll not see
  Her blossom fade, sweet Margery.

Perhaps a change may after all
  Prove best for her: to leave behind
  These home-sights seen time out of mind;
To get beyond the narrow wall
Of home, and learn home is not all.

Perhaps this way she may forget,
  Not all at once, but in a while:
May come to wonder how she set
  Her heart on this slight thing, and smile
  At her own folly, in a while.

Yet this I say and I maintain:
  Were I the man she's fretting for,
  I should my very self abhor
If I could leave her to her pain,
Uncomforted to tears and pain.

1 October 1863.

Maggie a Lady

You must not call me Maggie, you must not call me Dear,
For I'm Lady of the Manor now stately to see;
And if there comes a babe, as there may some happy year,
'Twill be little lord or lady at my knee.

Oh but what ails you, my sailor cousin Phil,
That you shake and turn white like a cockcrow ghost?
You're as white as I turned once down by the mill,
When one told me you and ship and crew were lost.

Philip my playfellow, when we were boy and girl
(It was the Miller's Nancy told it to me),
Philip with the merry life in lip and curl,
Philip my playfellow drowned in the sea!

I thought I should have fainted, but I did not faint;
I stood stunned at the moment, scarcely sad,
Till I raised my wail of desolate complaint
For you, my cousin, brother, all I had.

They said I looked so pale — some say so fair —
My lord stopped in passing to soothe me back to life:
I know I missed a ringlet from my hair
Next morning; and now I am his wife.

Look at my gown, Philip, and look at my ring —
I'm all crimson and gold from top to toe:
All day long I sit in the sun and sing,
Where in the sun red roses blush and blow.

And I'm the rose of roses, says my lord;
And to him I'm more than the sun in the sky,
While I hold him fast with the golden cord
Of a curl, with the eyelash of an eye.

His mother said fie, and his sisters cried shame,
His highborn ladies cried shame from their place:
They said fie when they only heard my name,
But fell silent when they saw my face.

Am I so fair, Philip? Philip, did you think
I was so fair when we played boy and girl
Where blue forget-me-nots bloomed on the brink
Of our stream which the mill-wheel sent awhirl?

If I was fair then, sure I'm fairer now,
Sitting where a score of servants stand,
With a coronet on high days for my brow
And almost a scepter for my hand.

You're but a sailor, Philip, weatherbeaten brown,
A stranger on land and at home on the sea,
Coasting as best you may from town to town:
Coasting along do you often think of me?

I'm a great lady in a sheltered bower,
With hands grown white through having nought to do:
Yet sometimes I think of you hour after hour
Till I nigh wish myself a child with you.

23 FEBRUARY 1865.

A LIFE'S PARALLELS (PAGE 261)

A transcript of *her* life, brave in resolution though yearning for rest.

GOLDEN SILENCES (PAGE 261)

It may be well to observe what might be called the triplet (stanza) rhyme of the third line of each division.

11. Cf. *Cardinal Newman*, p. 273, l. 3.

MARIANA (PAGE 262)

Compare Tennyson's *Mariana*, and *Mariana in the South*. The third stanza gives a Browning point of view.

ONE FOOT ON SEA AND ONE ON SHORE (PAGE 263)

What is the justification of the title? Point out the elements of the poem of the people.

BUDS AND BABIES (PAGE 264)

4. Cf. *Michael F. M. Rossetti*, p. 267, l. 13.

7. In a severely practical age, consider the noble practicality of this beautiful verse.

BIRCHINGTON CHURCHYARD (Page 266)

The churchyard in which Dante Gabriel Rossetti was buried in the same month when this sonnet was written. — W. M. R.

ONE SEA-SIDE GRAVE (Page 268)

It would seem to most people that these lines also relate to Birchington; my belief, however, is that they relate to Hastings, where Charles Cayley lies buried. — W. M. R.

WHO SHALL SAY? (Page 269)

Cf. *He and She.*

He and She

"Should one of us remember,
And one of us forget,
I wish I knew what each will do,
But who can tell as yet?"

"Should one of us remember,
And one of us forget,
I promise you what I will do —
And I'm content to wait for you,
And not be sure as yet."

Before 1882.

ONE SWALLOW DOES NOT MAKE A SUMMER (Page 269)

Was printed in *Time Flies*, but not reprinted in the *Verses*, 1893. No doubt my sister considered that it was not admissible into that series of exclusively devotional poetry. The like course was pursued with a few other items of *Time Flies*. — W. M. R.

A FROG'S FATE (Page 270)

Was printed as the preceding item. No title was given to the piece by my sister, so I have supplied one — W. M. R.

IF LOVE IS NOT WORTH LOVING (Page 271)

This is not the French *rondel*, but the Swinburnian "roundel." Consult Johnson's *Forms of English Poetry*, p. 303, and Gleeson White's *Ballades and Rondeaus*, Introduction.

NOW THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY (Page 272)

In a copy of *Time Flies*, Christina marked this as "my first roundel" — W. M. R.

JUDGE NOTHING BEFORE THE TIME (Page 272)

From *Time Flies*. The lines form the entry for 16 January, and appear to be intended to be read as a sequel to the entry for the 15th, which is on the text, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," followed by a reflection that "Adam's initial work of production (so far as we are told) was sin, death, hell, for himself and his posterity." — W. M. R.

In some of these lyrics there is a strange note of impassioned mysticism, as in the short rondeau for January 16, exemplified in these three lines: —

> "Love weighs the event, the long prehistory,
> Measures the depth beneath, the height above,
> The mystery with the ante-mystery." — Sharp.

CARDINAL NEWMAN (Page 273)

Read a good sketch of this noble spirit. The sonnet is a faint example of Miss Rossetti's lack of sectarian narrowness.

A HELPMEET FOR HIM (Page 273)

Not a bad solution of the vexed woman question, much that of Tennyson in *The Princess*. As explained in the Introduction, Miss Rossetti had neither artistic nor personal interest in such agitation.

HOW GREAT IS LITTLE MAN! (Page 274)

Cf. Emerson's *Voluntaries*.

QUINQUAGESIMA (Page 275)

With this may be compared the following poem written above ten years earlier.

At Last

Many have sung of love a root of bane:
  While to my mind a root of balm it is,
  For love at length breeds love; sufficient bliss
For life and death and rising up again.
Surely when light of Heaven makes all things plain,
  Love will grow plain with all its mysteries;
  Nor shall we need to fetch from over seas
Wisdom or wealth or pleasure safe from pain,
Love in our borders, love within our heart,
  Love all in all, we then shall bide at rest,
  Ended for ever life's unending quest,
  Ended for ever effort, change, and fear:
Love all in all; no more that better part
  Purchased, but at the cost of all things here.

Before 1882.

SLEEPING AT LAST (Page 275)

I regard these verses (the title again is mine) as being the very last that Christina ever wrote; probably late in 1893, or it may be early in 1894. They form a very fitting close to her poetic performance, the longing for rest (even as distinguished from actual bliss in heaven) being most marked throughout the whole course of her writings. I found the lines after her death, and had the gratification of presenting them, along with the childish script of her very first verses *To my Mother*, to the MS. Department of the British Museum. — W. M. R.

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